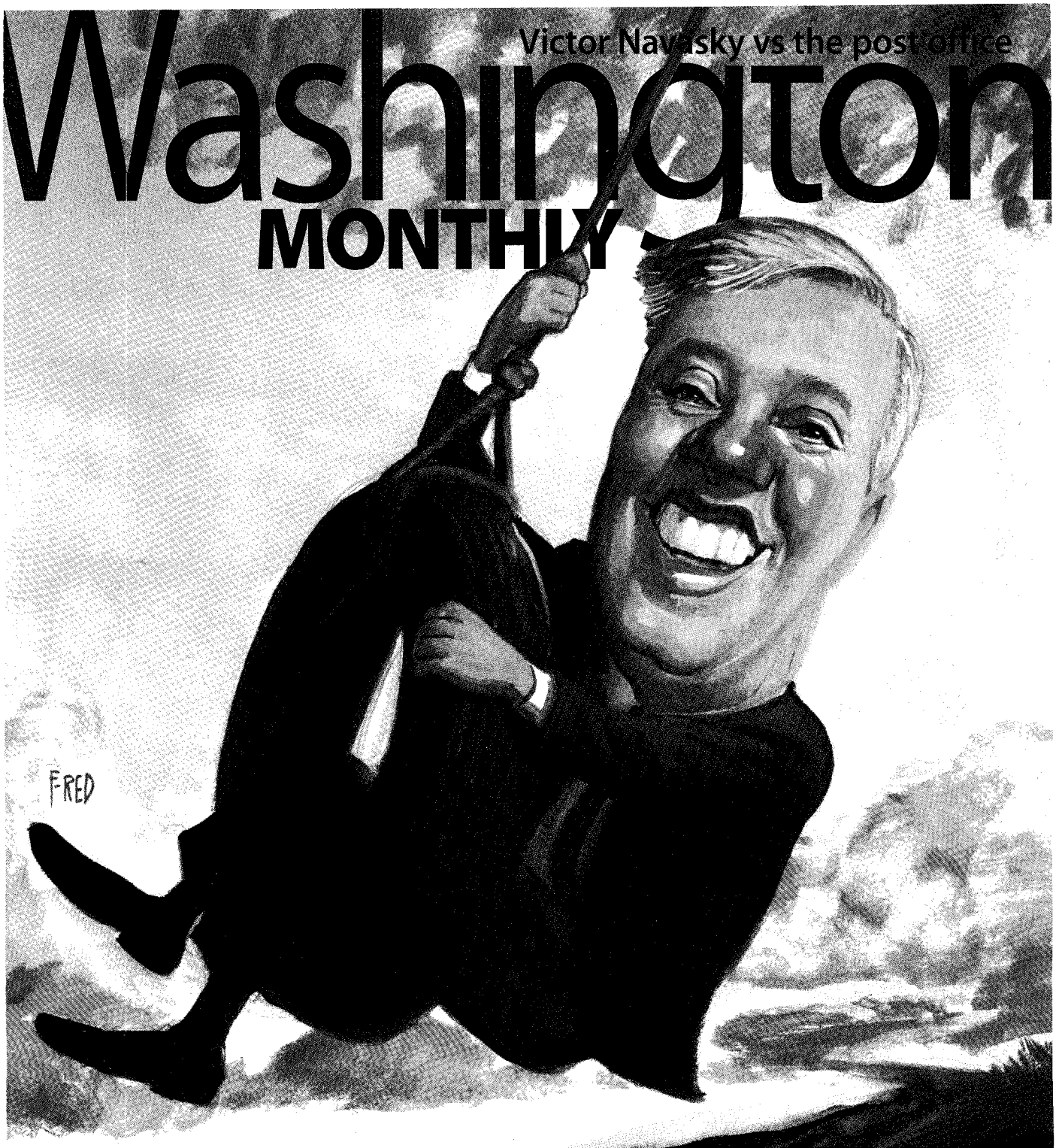
Washington MONTHLY

Victor Navasky vs the post office



Swing Conservat

The perilous bipartisanship of Sen. Lindsey Graham.

by Geoff Ea

April 2005 $4.50

The paucity of pundettes • Pinkertons at the CPA •

Paris on the Potomac • The stunted lives of military wives

William A. Galston on liberty • Bruce Reed on Alan Wolfe

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The UN's Role In Nation-Building

From the Congo to Iraq

UN

James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Keith Crane, Andrew Rathmell,
Brett Steele, Richard Teltschik, Anga Timilsina

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Washington MONTHLY

Volume 37, No. 4
April 2005

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Letters

Hooray for VA

Your article ("The Best Care Anywhere" by Phillip Longman, January/February) should be required reading for a) every member of Congress and the administration who continue to underfund the best health-care system in the country, and b) your colleagues in the print and broadcast media who appear to be interested in the Veterans Health Administration only when we have a problem.

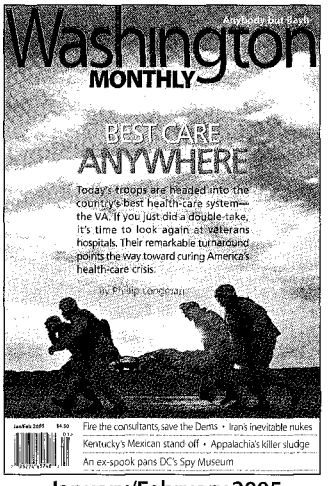
Patrick J. Doyle, Ph.D.
Associate Director for Research, Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

I am not a veteran, but I am employed as a nurse for the VHA in the outpatient prime medicine clinics. I cannot use the VHA for health care; therefore, I have a private sector physician. I cannot remember when, if ever, I have received the quality and detailed care that we are required to give the veterans with each and every visit.

When I converse with colleagues in the private sector, they are amazed at our per year in-patient and safety education requirements, as well as at the details we are required to handle within the clinic. As a result of this, our skills are sharpened every day as well as our thirst for the most updated knowledge in healthcare. In the private sector, it is the patient's responsibility to update their health-care providers about changes in their health. In the VHA, each visit to a specialty clinic, admission and consult are followed back to the patient's primary healthcare provider via electronic files. The primary health-care provider is really the primary, unlike in the private sector.

Colleen Goessling
St. Louis, Mo.

I find it curious that Phillip Longman, who had so much to



January/February 2005

say regarding the quality of the care and the quality of the economics found in the Veterans Health Administration, would omit any mention of the fact that VHA physicians do not carry malpractice insurance and the VHA follows strict algorithms in its prescription of medications. The VHA is completely insulated from expensive medical lawsuits and considers carefully the cost of medications when approving prescriptions.

The VHA offers a powerful example of the efficiency and real health benefits of a strongly centralized and managed health-care system. However, the VHA, like Kaiser Permanente, also severely limits the choices of the physician and patient.

Damien Ellens
New Haven, Conn.

Democratic defeats

Amy Sullivan's piece on the status of Democratic consultants ("Fire the Consultants," January/February) was interesting and enlightening. As someone who has worked at the periphery of this business in the Midwest, I am constantly amazed at the number of consultants (primarily D.C.-based) who continue to stay in demand cycle after cycle while piling up horrendous win-loss records.

You mention one excellent consultant, David Axelrod, who, in my view, could be our party's next national superstar in this field. As pollster Peter Hart pointed out during a stop in the Quad Cities last month, the Democrats' best hope lies in shaping a heartland strategy to move the Midwest into the Democratic column. To do that, our party had better look to the talented young party and policy advisers who live in—and know the values of—the heartland.

The time has come for our party to give a new generation of consultants an opportunity. The fleet of high-priced consultants who have helped our party lose the House, the Senate, and the White House have had their day in the sun.

Porter McNeil
Moline, Ill.

Thank you very much for your wonderful article about Democratic consultants in the recent issue of *The Washington Monthly*. I think you hit the nail on the head: The Democrats love to recycle people whose best days were 30 years ago.

As a young adult active in Democratic circles in North Carolina, I'm amazed at how the state and national parties keep picking retreads for candidates and staffs, and how the party really tries to block young talent from emerging.

John Quinterno
Via email

Amy Sullivan's recent piece on consultants is riddled with inaccuracy, innuendo, half-truths, and just plain foolishness. What she fails to report overwhelms in significance what she does write.

Good reporters should have good sources. Sullivan fails that test. Her characterization of my advice is both completely inaccurate and completely unsourced. In connection with another subject of her story, she mentions by name one, and only one, campaign source—a second level

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operative who was fired by his campaign manager part way through the one Senate campaign on which he worked.

As every serious Senate campaign will attest, Joe Hansen provides an invaluable service helping these operations set up shop and plan intelligently for the rigors to come. The campaigns he has assisted would be far worse off without his wise and experienced counsel. He and his partners also produce outstanding direct mail.

Bob Shrum hardly needs me to defend his illustrious career. Dozens of people here and abroad whose names start with president, prime minister, senator, and governor can provide far more eloquent testimony than can I.

Examples of highly selective reporting abound. Sullivan praises one of my fine "winning" colleagues for helping to take back the Oregon state legislature, but fails to mention our role in recapturing the North Carolina House. Nor does she note our work for Brian Schweitzer, who won the governor's chair, in Montana, a state that usually oozes red. Nor does Sullivan report our third winning effort as part of Barbara Boxer's team, this time assisting her in garnering more votes than any other Senate candidate in history.

Perhaps some people hire us because we have helped take away at least one Republican seat in every election cycle but one for over 20 years. Perhaps others hire us because we are the only polling firm never to have lost an incumbent race for Senate or governor. But I have a business only because people who have far more at stake than Sullivan spend a lot more time, effort, energy, and care thoroughly assessing our strengths and weaknesses.

Mark Mellman
President
The Mellman Group
Washington, D.C.

Framing the debate

Kenneth Baer's critique of *Don't Think Of An Elephant* is ultimately unconvincing because it argues against Lakoff's politics instead of taking on Lakoff's theory ("Word Games," January/February).

What Lakoff claims is that the manipulative power of language framing is ultimately more important to a successful political message than the ideas behind it. This new insight resonates with Democratic populists, like me, who are frustrated by conservatives' use of deceptive language to malign Democratic ideas and erode American values while Democratic leaders appear powerless to defend them.

I don't care if Baer agrees with Lakoff politically. What I care about is Lakoff's argument that language framing is relevant to create a more successful progressive message that will help Democrats win back the political advantage. Apparently, Baer agrees with that part of Lakoff's book by taking credit for it. Then, he slams him as a "left-wing liberal" which is exactly the language framing Republicans use to malign good ideas with irrelevant ideological bashing.

When will the New Democrats and DLC get it? The grassroots uprising in the Democratic Party is not about extremist ideology, as bombastic DLC egomaniac DINOs (Democrats In Name Only) such as Baer keep arguing, along with right-wing talk-show hosts. It is the natural insurrection of average patriotic Americans who can't sit around anymore and watch the country we love fall apart.

By the way, you may dismiss what I have to say by assuming that I am one of those "Birkenstock" liberals that Baer claims

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are pulling the Democrats too far to the left. Wrong again.
I am, in fact, a Christian, stay-at-home mom, and "recovering" Republican red-stater, who can't stomach what the GOP is doing to this country. If a former Republican like me is part of the lefty fringe as Baer defines it, then Baer is the one who is misleading Democrats, not Lakoff.

Wendy Foster Dickson
Manchester, Mo.

I pay my own fees

Because I have always enjoyed the fact-filled material in your magazine, though often disagreeing with it, I have a modest bone to pick with an article in your January/February issue ("Tilting at Windmills" by Charles Peters). The "Tee fees are on us" headline implies that the golf was paid for by sources other than judges themselves. This is a flat lie. While I do not play golf, at conferences or otherwise, it is simply untrue that golf or other recreational activities were paid for, or reimbursed by, the conference sponsors.

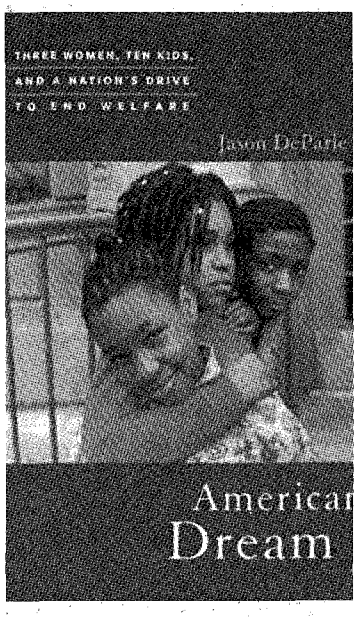
Your error is exactly the same as if a right-wing writer saw judges attending a law school conference in New York going into a Broadway play (or a strip club) and attacked the law school and the judges for being paid for such activities. I have a number of disagreements with the other arguments and implications made in your article, but those, at least, are matters of dispute. The financing of golf (as well as the "more time spent" language, though I would assume that most readers would believe that one was stated hyperbolically) is simply untrue.

Danny J. Boggs
Chief Judge, United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit
Kentucky–Tennessee–Ohio–Michigan
Louisville, Ky.

Charles Peters replies: I am happy to concede that judges pay for their own green fees. Unfortunately, the fact remains that most of the expenses —room, meals, and travel—of the judges who attend these conferences are often paid by groups that have an interest in litigation.

The Washington Monthly's
2004 Annual Political Book Award Winner

American Dream:
Three Women, Ten Kids, and a Nation's Drive to End Welfare
by Jason Deparle
Viking Books, 2004



For three decades, this magazine has held out hope for a generation of "new Dickinses": non-fiction writers who can extract literature from the lives of the poor and combine a novelist's touch with a penetrating eye for policy. We've seen few better examples of this kind of writing than Jason DeParle's exacting, funny, wrenching book, *American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids, and a Nation's Drive to End Welfare*, the best piece of poverty journalism in many years. The book follows three welfare moms, Angie Jobe, Opal Caples, and Jewell Reed as they navigate seven years of life after welfare reform in Milwaukee, whose program had been considered a national model--interspersing their story with the tale of the Washington fight over welfare reform, which DeParle followed up close as *The New York Times'* poverty correspondent. DeParle's judicious, sensitive eye picks apart the pathologies of life in the ghetto and the minute failings of programs that have undermined the government's promise of alleviating the problems of poverty, while remaining essentially upbeat about the prospect of improving the ghettos, one of America's next great moral challenges.

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Tilting at **Windmills**

by **Charles Peters**, founding editor

Quit the day job

As a student of government, my admiration for Condoleezza Rice has not been unbounded. But, as a football fan, my hat is off to her. Asked before the Super Bowl to predict the winner, she picked the Patriots by three points on a field goal by Adam Vinatieri, which is exactly what happened.

A party of one

Recently on Jim Lehrer's "News Hour," during the Brooks/Shields segment, David Brooks, in contending that the Republicans were much more flexible on Social Security reform than the Democrats, said that they were willing to raise the payroll tax on incomes over $90,000. After Brooks had repeated this point several times, Mark Shields leaned over and said, "Who are they?" Brooks sheepishly answered, "Bush and Lindsey Graham." Since on this issue Bush has been ambivalent at best, that leaves a "they" of one.

The Ayatollah as Miss Manners

I had thought that "fatwa" was a pronouncement of heavy import—like "eliminate the heathen from our midst"—laid on the faithful by some ayatollah. I'm grateful to Philip Kennicott of *The Washington Post*, who has explained that this is not at all the case. One fatwa issued by Ayatollah Ali Sistani says that facelifts are permissible. Another, Fatwa 2638 to be exact, says "there is no objection to swallowing the food which comes out from between the teeth at the time of tooth picking." All this sounds quite tolerant, but beware of Fatwa 2648: You should not drink water "from the side of a container which is cracked or chipped off."

Above the fumes

Although I have never been a NASCAR fan, I have long regarded it as one of the last sports where the average fan is king. Now, I regret to report, the luxury skybox has come even to NASCAR. As they do in basketball, baseball, and football, the wealthy are able to avoid mixing with the hoi polloi by paying a fee of between $70,000 and $200,000, according to *The Washington Times*.

A complimentary martini with your colonoscopy

A similar trend is apparent in health care. What are called "personal patient advocacy" firms offer "concierge" or "boutique" care, which, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, can cost $25,000 a year for a membership on top of a $30,000 initiation fee. This buys not only "executive physical, chauffeured limousine service to appointments. . .a personal patient advocate who researches doctors and treatments," but also the booking of doctor and test appointments and an annual meeting with "a specialist in the area of aesthetic enhancement," meaning a dermatologist or a plastic surgeon.

Three hundred miles and a world away

Readers sometimes ask why so many Tilting items come from the *Charleston Gazette*. I'm a faithful reader of the paper for two reasons. I like to keep up with what's happening in my hometown. But a more important reason is that I want to maintain contact with the real world. Washington is a city with a tendency to view make-believe as reality. Memos are written, meetings are held, offices reorganized, legislation passed by Congress and signed by the president, all creating the appearance of vibrant activity to those involved, without the slightest necessary impact on reality out in the country this city is charged with governing. I read the *Gazette* to find out what's happening out there.

There's a slight problem with that law

Here is an example. You probably saw stories last month revealing that individuals on the terrorist watch list could still purchase guns legally. A number of these reports mentioned in passing that the mentally ill could not buy guns. The reporters should read the *Gazette*. Since 1999, at least four murders have been committed in West Virginia with guns purchased from licensed dealers by people suffering from mental illness—three of them with conditions serious enough that they have been repeatedly committed to mental hospitals. Why did the other journalists think that couldn't happen? Because Congress had passed a law. The law, however, is a perfect example of congressional make-believe. In West Virginia and 44 other states, gun dealers have no way of checking to see if a purchaser has a record of mental illness. If the dealer can't find out the facts, he can't be held liable for the sale.

Ya gotta get up

Jared Sandberg of *The Wall Street Journal* recently wrote about how the "dread of Sunday night affects even workers who like their jobs." I am one of them. I also welcome the arrival of Friday night, even though for most of the last 45 years I have worked on Saturday. These two feelings must have been ingrained by the time I left primary school. I know they had taken hold when I reached Charleston High School, where I can

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remember liking everything about it except having to get up in the morning. Come to think of it, that may be the key. Even when I worked on Saturdays, I felt free to sleep late. And even when I didn't have to work on Monday, I felt guilty if I stayed in bed.

Would a calculator help?

Another example of make-believe is a law passed in 1990 requiring drug companies to give Medicaid the "best price." According to the Government Accountability Office, however, the law has not been enforced. The result, according to Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa), is that "for fifteen years, drug companies have been profiting from a system that costs taxpayers untold hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars annually."

Why have the companies not obeyed the law? They say that the government office that administers the drug program, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, has failed to give them "clear guidance" on how to figure out the best price. Government officials, according to Robert Pear of *The New York Times*, defend themselves by saying they "lacked the resources" to verify the correctness of the price.

In one case that the government discovered accidentally through some drug company whistleblowers, Schering-Plough was found to have short-changed the government by a total of $345 million.

The bustling port of Little Rock

You may remember that last year we reported that more homeland security money per capita was being spent in Wyoming than in New York. Now a *New York Times* article on port security tells us things are getting better. The obvious terrorist targets, including New York, Los Angeles, and Oakland, are getting the lion's share of the money. Still, grants are also being given to the ports in St. Croix, the Virgin Islands, Martha's Vineyard, Ludington, Mich.—and you won't believe this—"six locations in Arkansas."

Now we know at least one reason why Washington's local officials sometimes fail to adhere to the highest standards of public administration. There is a go-go club in the basement of the Franklin D. Reeves Center, which otherwise houses only District government offices.

Ladies of the night

Traveling to New York on a modest budget, never easy, may soon become impossible. The affordable hotels where I'd stayed in the last decade—the Empire, the Mayflower, and the Gramercy Park—have closed so they can be converted to more profitable uses. It reminds me of the *Monthly*'s early offices. At the first one, 1150 Connecticut Avenue, we rented seven rooms with a fireplace and bay windows for just $475 a month, a deal that was clearly not going to last—and it did not. In five years, we had to move because the building was torn down and replaced by a glitzy edifice featuring wraparound windows and rents that were out of sight.

We moved to the LaSalle building at 1040 Connecticut, where the rent was the same but the rooms were smaller, tiny in fact, and there was no fireplace. The building had its own charms, however, with a mixture of offices and apartments that made life more interesting than it is in the usual office building.

Among the more colorful tenants were several ladies of the night. You would sometimes run into their customers in the lobby, waiting for the elevator and casting nervous glances over their shoulders, fearful that the next person through the door would be their mother-in-law.

I ran into John Mitchell, Nixon's attorney general, several times in the lobby. As to his destination, I cannot say with certainty, but it was definitely not the offices of *The Washington Monthly*. Of course, after five years, that building was torn down in order to make way for one more glamorous. By the way, the official New York hotel of the *Monthly* those days was the Royalton. In its pre-Ian Schrager era, a room could be had for $8.50. The "deluxe" room was $17.

But they love Britney Spears

There have been a lot of stories recently about the sorry state of American high schools, illustrated by falling test scores and other alarming evidence. But nothing I have seen has dismayed me as much as this revelation of the high school student's ignorance of the First Amendment. Asked if they agreed that newspapers should be allowed to publish stories freely without government approval, only 51 percent of students said yes, according to a survey conducted by the Knight Foundation. In other words, 49 percent think that government approval should be required.

Can I borrow the Cessna? It won't take long

After a great tragedy, Washington's tendency is to announce tough measures designed to prevent a repetition, and then to steadily chip away at them under pressure from lobbyists. After 9/11, private planes were forbidden to use Reagan National Airport. The reason was that Reagan

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National is within seconds of the White House and the Capitol, which are, of course, prime targets for terrorists. Now, Sen. George Allen (R-Va.) has introduced a bill that will let private planes back in Reagan National.

The private plane lobby is strong, including not only the planes' manufacturers and the general aviation industry that services them, but also corporations with their private jets and private pilots, many of whom are influential members of their communities. Their argument is that if commercial airlines can use the airport, why can't we? That argument sounds reasonable, but while there are only a few thousand commercial pilots, there are 250,000 private pilots. How is the government going to investigate all of them to find out they're not terrorists? And even if it could, many of them fly from airports that have little or no security, from which terrorists could easily steal one of the planes, head for Reagan National when it is open to private aviation, and then at the last second turn the plane into a flying bomb headed for the White House or the Capitol.

Sucking up

Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.) may have been a trifle harsh in describing Alan Greenspan as "one of the biggest political hacks in Washington." But Greenspan is a good distance from the heroic figure depicted by most of the media. If there was a decisive moment in the debates over Bush's tax cuts in 2001, it was when they were endorsed by Greenspan. Yet they, and Bush's subsequent tax cuts, have been primarily responsible for the deficit that Greenspan now so piously bemoans. My guess is that he was motivated on the tax cuts not so much by political loyalty as by a desire to be reappointed by Bush, the same reason he supported the very opposite program, Clinton's deficit reduction in 1993. He got his reward. He was reappointed by both presidents.

Contemptible

Susan Estrich, who has come to think of herself as a political guru on the dubious basis of her experience running Michael Dukakis's campaign in 1988, recently applied to become a columnist at the *Los Angeles Times*. When the editorial page editor, Michael Kinsley, turned her down, she speculated that his brain might have been damaged by the Parkinson's disease from which he suffers. I don't like to use the word "contemptible" about any other human being, but I do not hesitate to apply it to Susan Estrich. Anyone who reads Kinsley's column knows he's just as smart as he ever was, and I've never known anyone smarter.

How am I supposed to pay the nanny?

"S.S. Option: raise tax cap. Increasing Social Security tax on wealthiest could raise billions" reads a four-column headline at the top of the front page of the *Charleston Gazette*. Even though eliminating the $95,000 cap on income subject to the Social Security tax could keep the system solvent for another 75 years, I have not seen such a headline in *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*. A recent headline in the Sunday Style section of the *Times* helps explain why: "Six figures? Not Enough." It seems that a hundred-thousand dollar salary no longer equals serious success to many big-city professionals. If $100,000 is not enough, they certainly do not want to see an increase above $90,000 in the amount of income subject to the withholding tax. Among the professionals we're talking about are the top reporters and editors at both the *Times* and the *Post*, who now earn more than $100,000—the average at the *Times* is $110,000—and, in the case of two-paycheck families, well over $200,000.

Chump change

At long last, the media are paying attention to the FDA's failure to follow up on the drugs it approves to find out how they actually perform and what adverse effects they may have. The result has been a pledge of reform by the FDA. But take a close look at the agency's budget. Is the administration putting its money where its mouth is? It sounds like it is when we're told that there will be a 24 percent increase in the appropriation for follow-up. But look closer: It's 24 percent of the current $27 million, or exactly $5 million.

The dread AMT

If *The New York Times* failed to give the merit of raising the $90,000 limit on Social-Security taxes the same prominence accorded by the *Gazette*, the *Times* has given top-of-the-front-page prominence to one tax. Guess what the fellows at the *Times* are worried about? It's the Alternative Mini-

FANCY WORDS

SAT prep courses are urging students to use fancy instead of simple words when writing the newly required essay--for "false," they prefer "untenable" or "fallacious." They must think Hemingway would fail the SAT.

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mum Tax, which is designed to keep the wealthy from using deductions to erase their tax bill. Yet the *Times* headline paints the AMT as a villain: "Case of Vanishing Deductions: Alternative Tax called culprit." *The Washington Post* and the *Times* even editorialized against the AMT.

I asked Robert McIntyre of the Citizens for Tax Justice why these upscale professionals were so upset about the AMT. He explained that, although the very rich have by and large been able to devise ways to avoid the AMT, it now threatens the moderately wealthy those with incomes in the $100,000-$500,000 range. McIntyre says it could wipe out their gains from the Bush tax cuts. Is that bad?

Losing West Virginia

Ominous news for Democrats comes from the *Gazette*'s Tom Searls, who interviewed two political experts about the significance of Bush's victories in 2000 and 2004 by margins that grew from 6 to 13 percent. "Once could have been a fluke," the University of Virginia's Larry Sabato told him. "Twice indicates a new trend, especially because the margin was so much larger this past year." Robert Rupp of West Virginia Wesleyan College added: "2000 wasn't just the aberration that many Democrats had hoped. The fact [Bush] won so convincingly shows West Virginia is a state that not only will Democrats have to work for, but possibly concede."

The winner's secret

Around 16 years ago, *The Washington Monthly* launched a feature called The Worst City Government. Often written by Katherine Boo, it sought stories of municipal ineptitude from around the country. The District of Columbia emerged a clear winner over other cities, and so dominated the column that we were afraid it was becoming boring, and decided to close it down. The District government, however, continues to operate as ineptly as ever.

Now, we know at least one reason why local officials sometimes fail to adhere to the highest standards of public administration. There is a go-go club in the basement of the Franklin D. Reeves Center, which otherwise houses only District government offices. We found out about the club because on Feb. 13 a man was stabbed outside. The stabbing followed "the attempted shooting of another club patron a few minutes earlier," according to *The Washington Post*'s Bill Brawley.

Go ahead, make me

A giant problem for West Virginia is Workman's Compensation, a fund that corporations are supposed to finance in order to pay benefits to their workers who are injured on the job. The catch is that in West Virginia a lot of the coal companies fail to pay their share of the premiums. They have been allowed to get away without paying, sometimes by corrupt officials, but more often for the same reasons that keep the state from enforcing environmental laws: It doesn't want to risk shutting down the companies and throwing their employees out of work. The coal industry, according to the *Gazette*'s Paul J. Nyden, is responsible for half of the unfunded liability of the Workman's fund, which now runs more than $3 billion. Is there a similar problem in other states?

Why take a cheaper drug when the more expensive one works?

For many months now, druggists have been deluged with complaints from customers who can't seem to find Prilosec on the store shelves. A clue as to why it is missing comes from the fact that it and a much more expensive prescription drug called Nexium are made by the same manufacturer, the British pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca.

I have taken both drugs to treat an acid-reflux condition. They work equally well. So I switched from Nexium to Prilosec to save money. It seems likely that AstraZeneca does not want to encourage others to follow my example. The manufacturer makes a lot more money when you use Nexium. And you're certainly more likely to use Nexium when you can't find Prilosec.

Fancy words

Did you see *The Washington Post* article by Michael Dobbs that the SAT prep courses are now urging students to use fancy instead of simple words when writing the newly required essay? They recommend "antithesis" over "opposite," and "irrefutable" or "incontrovertible" instead of "true." And for "false," they prefer "untenable" or "fallacious." They must think Hemingway would fail the SAT.

I've been fortunate enough to have edited a good many really fine writers. They have taught me that the fancy word is justified only when it is truly more precise than a simple word, or when it makes the reader laugh, and is at least forgivable when the writer is desperate for a synonym. The worst way to use fancy words is to impress the reader with the writer's intelligence. Yet this seems to be exactly what the SAT prep courses are recommending.

They'd better hustle

My favorite example of make-believe involves odometers. When it was revealed that used car dealers were fiddling with the mileage to make their cars more alluring to buyers, Congress made it illegal to tamper with odometers. But it only appropriated enough money to hire four inspectors. There are 120,000 used car dealers.

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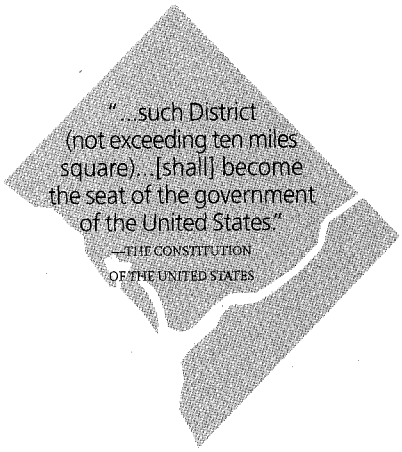
10 MILES SQUARE



A Tale of Two Cities

Get ready for "Paris on the Potomac."

By Christina Larson

Visitors who traditionally flock to Washington in April to admire the cherry blossoms might puzzle this spring at prominent advertisements on bus billboards and and metro brochures hawking a new marketing theme: a three-month citywide festival called "Paris on the Potomac." Museums will showcase Montmartre artists; cycle tours will appreciate French architecture along Pennsylvania Avenue; and cafés will serve crepes and *café au laits* on the National Mall.

This celebration of all things Gallic in a city where two years ago Congress banned the phrase "French fries" from its cafeteria menus might raise a few eyebrows—especially as it's coinciding with a sudden White House rush toward rapprochement with France, in part to solidify support for U.S. policies in the Middle East. Could the same Rovian puppeteers suspected of planting friendly "reporters" in press briefings and closing doors to presidential town halls on dissenters also be jingling the strings behind D.C.'s new pro-French P.R. blitz?

As it happens, tracing the festival's origins reveals less sinister forces at work. It all began one afternoon in the fall of 2003, in a cozy 4th-floor conference

Art by Molly Crabapple

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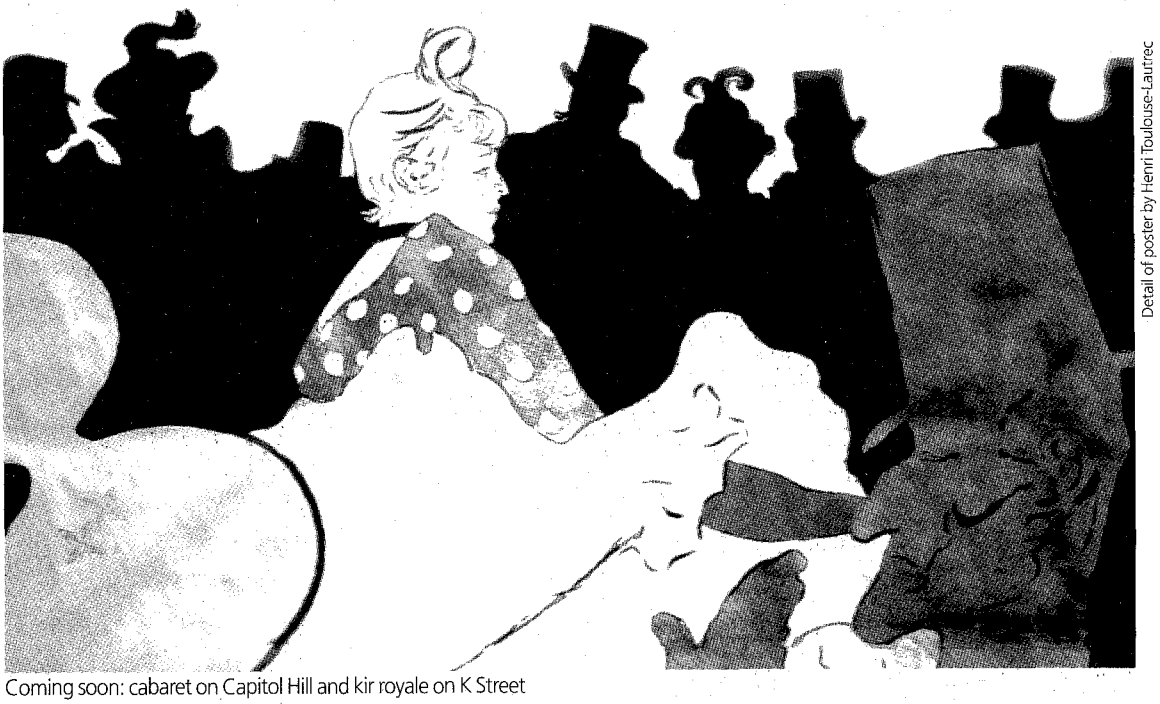
room in the downtown offices of the city's hospitality industry association, the Washington Convention and Tourism Corporation. Huddled around the table that day were a dozen directors and marketing gurus representing the city's premiere cultural landmarks, from the National Gallery of Art to the Shakespeare Theater to the Kennedy Center. This group, christened Washington's "cultural steering committee," had first convened at the behest of Mayor Anthony Williams in the weeks after 9/11, when fear of future attacks and locked doors at such popular sites as the White House had transformed downtown into a tourism ghost-town. The committee's mission was to showcase the city's oft-overlooked cultural attractions and lure back sightseers, with their fanny packs and disposable dollars. They had already orchestrated, in the summer of 2002, a successful citywide promotion entitled "Jacqueline Kennedy's Washington," weaving events around a Corcoran Gallery exhibit of the former first lady's enviable wardrobe, and tours of her Georgetown homes (local restaurants caught the spirit, offering such specials as cream-filled meringues shaped like pillbox hats).

At this particular monthly meeting, the committee's convener, a feisty local historian named Kathy Smith, asked the members to whip out their exhibit calendars and scan for lucky coincidences that might suggest future festival motifs. The National Gallery of Art's formidable press chief Debra Ziska announced that a renowned expert on Parisian history had agreed to curate the most extensive exhibit ever staged of Toulouse-Lautrec paintings, set to open in late March 2005. Heads nodded, duly impressed. The representative from the National Museum of Women in the Arts chimed in that a show featuring French impressionist Berthe Morisot would also run that spring. And the Shakespeare Theater's director revealed that during the same season curtains would raise on Alfred de Musset's classic French drama, *Lorenzaccio*.

To Ziska, the opportunity was obvious—a few major exhibits and a French play, each of which required months of wrangling with directors, art collectors, and international loan agents to stage, were coinciding, and during spring's tourist high-season to boot: This surely called for a French-themed fête. As she recalls, "I proposed it, and people pretty much jumped on board."

An ideal festival motif, after all, boasts a few blockbuster shows to entice visitors to Washington, but also allows ample opportunity for other galleries to participate by fashioning related exhibits, hopefully giving visitors enough reason to stick around that extra day in Washington. And what museum doesn't already have some French art in its collection? From the Cor-



Detail of poster by Henri Toulouse-Lautrec

Coming soon: cabaret on Capitol Hill and kir royale on K Street

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coran Gallery, with its restored 18th-century Parisian parlor room, to the Textile Museum, proud owner of French paisley patterns, to the Spy Museum, which houses artifacts on Cardinal Richelieu's espionage network, nearly every gallery could, with a rummage through its closets, devise relevant exhibits.

Then someone raised an uncomfortable topic: Would current political tensions with France dampen the festival's appeal? This gave some members pause; a few awkward glances were exchanged. Then Smith rallied the group, reassuring them, as she recalls, that "politics shouldn't be an obstacle to promoting culture." Drawing on her knowledge of the city's history (she's the author of a book, a musical, and high-school curriculum on the annals of municipal D.C.), Smith extolled what perfect sense it made to celebrate the French in Washington: "We're a city designed by a Frenchman, Pierre L'Enfant. We have public parks and boulevards like Paris. Washington really looks like a very European city."

Over the next few weeks, the committee tested the waters, floating the idea by local hotel and restaurant managers. The response was enthusiastic and encouraging. Hotel sales teams eagerly devised such confections as the Fairmont's "French poodle package" (a hotel room comes with croissants, *café au lait*, and a pink plush poodle toy), and K Street restaurant chefs swooned for an excuse to fortify their menus with escargot, filet mignon, and kir royale. And with that, the festival was on.

Over at the French embassy, the press office, only recently besieged with indignant phone calls about the "axis of weasels," received an unexpected, yet immensely welcome call. Smith's committee wanted help planning and promoting French cultural events in Washington. *Magnifique*! The embassy's cultural attaché, Roland Celette, started speed-dialing Paris to schedule cabaret performances, cinema screenings, and theater performances. To publicize the festival, he dusted off his mailing list of known Francophiles (if you've attended an event at the embassy before, you're likely on it).

If word had leaked earlier to red-state GOP congressmen inclined to thunder against taxpayer-supported institutions advancing the interests of cheese-eating-surrender-monkeys, this coalition of the willing, the French embassy and Washington's municipal marketers, might have sparked a local culture war.

But before the festival brochures had come back from the printer, as luck would have it the White House had a change of heart. In early February, a few weeks before the curtain raised on "Paris on the Potomac," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice flew to the French capitol to accept kisses on her hand from President Jacques Chirac. Later that month, Bush dined with Chirac in Brussels, where, without a smirk, he rechristened potato rods "French fries." Suddenly, it became politically acceptable again in Washington to raise a glass of pinot noir to the French. In fact, the only minor political intrigue has come in the form of a few slightly *jealous* calls to the French embassy, from other Washington-based diplomats seeking rainmaking tips to bring about an upcoming London (or Madrid or Berlin) on the Potomac.

Christina Larson is the managing editor of *The Washington Monthly.*

JARGON WATCH:
Social Security as simile

"You've heard about reparations, you know, where whites compensate blacks for enslaving us. Well guess what we've got now. Reverse reparations... So the next time some Democrat says he won't touch Social Security, ask why he thinks blacks owe reparations to whites."

—Radio advertisement sponsored by GOPAC, a Republican interest group, and broadcast in the Kansas City area in 2002.

"Would liberals support Social Security reform if they thought of it as reparations for blacks?"

—Rich Lowry, editor of the National Review, *in the National Review Online January 4, 2005.*

"Social Security, in my view, is like a car with a flat tire. We should replace the flat tire, not replace the car."

—Peter R. Orszag, Senior Fellow, Economic Studies, Brookings Institution, November 2004

"Social Security is like the 'Energizer Bunny.' It keeps on going ... and growing."

—Heidi Hartmann, Institute for Women's Policy Research president and CEO, November 2002

Social Security is the "Titanic headed to the iceberg."

—Stephen Moore, former president of the Club for Growth, on "Crossfire," December 2004

Great Moments in American Education

"I want to reassure all the parents that we have a very clean school even if we do have a problem with rats."

— Hector Hernandez
Principal, El Jardin Elementary School
Brownsville, Texas, March 8, 2005
(Associated Press.)

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Photo of Sonny Bono Memorial Park by Carl Iseli

The Beat Goes On

George Washington got a monument. Sonny Bono gets a traffic island.

By William Beutler

In Washington, D.C., great men are judged by their memorials. Our presidential holy trinity, Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln, are deified in soaring temples of marble and towers of granite. Less imposing are the bronze sculptures of Albert Einstein on the grounds of the National Academy of Sciences and of Mahatma Gandhi outside the Embassy of India. Any number of once-famous military men have lent their names and mounted likenesses to parks that now mostly offer relaxation to bicycle messengers and to traffic circles more likely to inspire bursts of cursing than shows of admiration.

And then there is the Sonny Bono Memorial Traffic Island … er, Park.

A few years ago, a fifth-generation Washingtonian and commercial developer named Geary Simon, grieving the sudden death of his close friend Sonny Bono, was making frequent trips out West to visit the grave of the congressman, entertainer, and restaurateur until distance became a problem, and Simon realized that "I've gotta build a park for my friend."

Virtually any Washingtonian with the gumption and interest can turn one of the city's green spaces into their own personal park—or, it seems, memorial—through the city's Park Partners program. Residents pick a space, sign an agreement promising to maintain it, and generally do little more than keep the area clean and green. The program was intended simply as an urban renewal initiative, a way of combating the ongoing battle against litter, pollution, and vandalism that have destroyed many of the city's parks. But there's nothing to prevent someone from making the most of their park.

Simon approached the Department of Parks and Recreation with his chosen spot: a triangle of concrete and weeds at the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and 20th and O streets, one block southwest of Dupont Circle. The department approved his plan, and Simon threw himself into the project, tearing out not just the weeds, but the sidewalks as well. He installed a sprinkler system and lighting, and flew in authentic Kentucky bluegrass, plus a Japanese maple from a nursery in Sonny's congressional district. A short, old iron fence now surrounds the park—a space the size of a smallish studio apartment—while two

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benches provide seating, and a bronze plaque at the entrance alerts particularly observant pedestrians to the fact that they are walking by the Sonny Bono Memorial Park.

Today, the park is ringed by a variety of apartment and office buildings, including a FedEx World Service Center, the Robert Strauss Building (one Washington wise man looking out over another), and the Front Page, the bar where Monica Lewinsky once relaxed with a drink after driving her friend Linda to drop off some tapes at a lawyer's office. Until recently, the city's historical society was also located on that block. A collections librarian there was apparently one of the less observant; not until I called to ask about the park did he realize what the verdant triangle across from his office was.

City officials weren't quite prepared for Simon's enthusiasm. Liz Guthrie, who runs the park program, was surprised and pleased—"I think that's wonderful!"—to learn that Simon has provided for the upkeep of the park in his will, guaranteeing Sonny's name will be around for future generations. Most park sponsors sign a three-year agreement that is automatically renewed unless either side decides to end it. In the six years since Simon took over the park, he has poured substantial funds into it, spending $25,000 on the initial development and an additional four to five thousand each year for upkeep. He has even hired a porter to perform regular maintenance.

Standing in the park, the fifty-ish Simon recalls first meeting Sonny at a Georgetown tae kwon do academy where Simon's girlfriend gave lessons to Mary Bono and the couple's children. Like most politicians and celebrities, Sonny liked being recognized. But Simon wouldn't give him the satisfaction.

"Hi, I'm Sonny."

"Hi, I'm Geary. What do you do?"

Sonny couldn't tell if he was being played. He said he was a congressman. "You're new, though," replied Simon. "What did you do before that?" They both burst out laughing and were soon fast friends.

As spring approaches, Simon is preparing to replant the park; each April he imports 800 white tulip bulbs from Holland. This spring he plans to add artwork—maybe a sculpture or statue—and he is working on a source of shade for hot summer days. Beneath the park is a vault containing sheet music for "The Beat Goes On," a coffee mug from Sonny's restaurant, campaign memorabilia, and sealed envelopes from Sonny's friends. Simon thinks Sonny would approve.

The diminutive congressman served in Washington for only three years before his death; his widow Mary has now held his seat for twice that time. But Simon doesn't have any doubt that Sonny could have had a much greater impact on the city. At an Ocean City, Md., restaurant one summer, Sonny looked around the table and announced to his friends, "I think I'll run for president." If he'd lived, Simon says, "I definitely think Sonny would have run."

William Beutler is a writer for *The Hotline* and a contributor to DCist.com.

The Washington Monthly's

Monthly Journalism Award

Peter Gosselin

Los Angeles Times

Three-part series, Oct-Dec 2004:

—"If America is richer, why are its families so much less secure?"

—"The poor have more things today—including wild income swings."

—"How just a handful of setbacks sent the Ryans tumbling out of prosperity."

A pervasive sense of economic insecurity has endured among American families despite low unemployment and increasing stock ownership. But Americans' financial fears are not irrational and the causes behind them are not unintentional. In an exhaustively researched series for the *Los Angeles Times*, Peter Gosselin identifies a three decade-long political and corporate effort to shift economic risk away from business and onto the backs of Americans. For those at the bottom, the ongoing corrosive attacks on the social safety net have made every layoff, accident, or illness a potential economic catastrophe. Meanwhile, middle- and upper-income Americans have seen the promise of job security shredded due to a corporate culture that no longer recognizes any obligation to its employees. Weaving together sound economic and political analysis with great storytelling, Gosselin delineates the forces changing our economy and the families whose lives have been sent into tumult. Gosselin shows that in today's economy, no one feels secure because no one is secure.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including a copy of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005. Or email us at editors@washingtonmonthly.com.

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Silent Femmes

It's not really discrimination that keeps women off the op-ed pages. It's women themselves.

By Amy Sullivan

Illustrations by Garry Trudeau

Oh, come *on*, said Susan Estrich. For years, the University of Southern California law professor and former Democratic operative had tracked gender imbalance on the op-ed pages of her hometown newspaper, the *Los Angeles Times*, and she recently lobbied its newly installed editorial page editor Michael Kinsley to feature more female writers. Now, it seemed, the paper was taunting her. The headline on the opinion section one Sunday in mid-February asked, "Where are the great women thinkers?," while the accompanying piece by conservative writer Charlotte Allen—by turns obnoxious and thought-provoking—argued that the ranks of female public intellectuals had been thinned by feminism. This was not exactly what Estrich had in mind when she asked the paper to correct the nearly 4-to-1 ratio between male- and female-authored opinion pieces.

The cartoon version of Estrich would have had plumes of smoke billowing out her ears as she fired off an intemperate email to Kinsley, giving him "ONE MORE CHANCE" to deal with the issue. The email was soon followed by a letter to the editor, circulated to several dozen southern California women for their signatures, asking them to help fight "blatant sex discrimination at the *Los Angeles Times*," and then forwarded to Kinsley. "I tried...to be nice. I said: Please publish the letter," Estrich later protested in her syndicated column. "Please publish this, I said, or I'll have to send it to Matt Drudge."

A brazen threat is not most people's idea of "nice," and Kinsley, accusing Estrich of blackmail, refused to run the letter. So, as promised, she sent it—and their email correspondence—to Drudge and several other journalists, and the situation only deteriorated further.

Although the *Times*' gender ratio has not improved since the kerfuffle started, Kinsley—in a case of either odd timing or retaliation—found space to publish two op-eds by Estrich's ex-husband, an associate dean at USC's Annenberg School for Communication. Most appallingly, Estrich charged that Parkinson's disease has impaired Kinsley's judgment and ability to do his job.

As fascinating and unseemly as the spat has been, it has ultimately clouded more than it has revealed. Estrich was right about one thing: There simply aren't many recognized opinion-makers who are women. Gender gaps have narrowed in other fields—women have gained ground in computer sciences, math departments, and science labs, and women now constitute the majority of incoming medical school classes. In journalism, too, newsrooms and television studios are filled with more female reporters and—to a lesser extent—editors and producers than ever before.

Amy Sullivan is an editor of *The Washington Monthly*.

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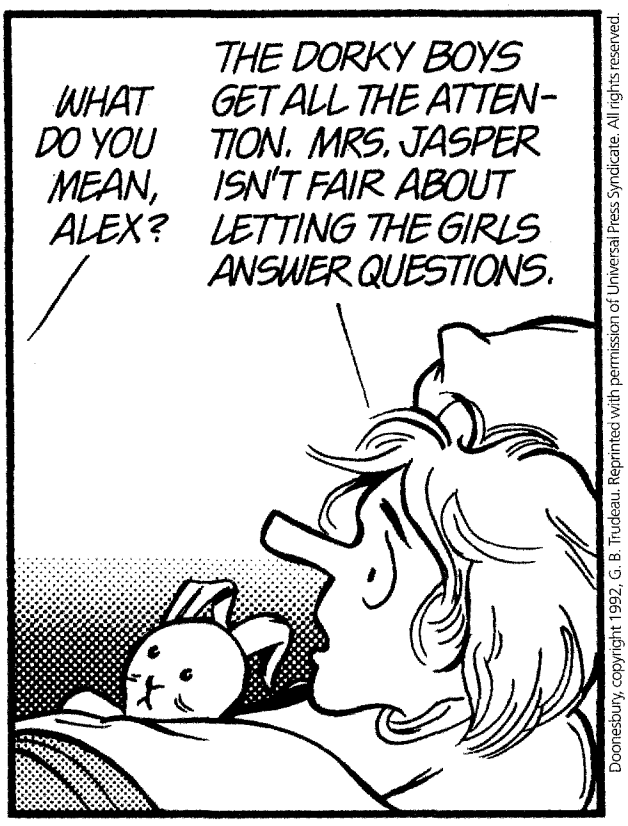

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On the op-ed pages of major newspapers, however, the number of female columnists is roughly that of 25 years ago. Political magazines—with the notable exceptions of *The Nation* and *Salon*—are run, edited, and written by men (indeed, the masthead of our own magazine, which has launched some of the sharpest pens in journalism, includes only four female names in the list of 36 former editors; that's 11 percent.) Even in that brave new democratizing world of blogs, the professional bloggers all have names like Mickey and Eric and Andrew and Josh.

As a female editor at a political opinion magazine, I've bucked this trend, but I've also worried about the absence of women's voices in my field. With a paltry 10 to 20 percent of opinion pieces in major newspapers written by women, surely editorial page editors could improve their percentages without lowering their standards. Is it the case, however,—as Estrich's righteous, old-style-feminist "let us in the door!" cry would have it—that the problem is mainly one of gender bias? When I considered whether to take this job, one of the first questions I asked was why there had been so few female editors at the magazine. The response—women just don't apply for the job—was both surprising and unsatisfying. The disturbing truth is that women's voices aren't rare in political discourse because of blatant sex discrimination; they're rare because women don't raise them. But that's because women themselves have been raised to feel ill-at-ease in the rough-and-tumble, male-dominated world of political expression.

Snap judgment

If the problem was truly a matter of male editors refusing to let women through the door of their "No Girls Allowed" clubhouse, there is an easy enough way to check that: compare the record of editorial pages run by women to those run by men. Two women have presided over major editorial sections in recent years—the late Meg Greenfield at *The Washington Post* and Gail Collins, the current editorial page editor of *The New York Times*—and if male bias was largely to blame, we would expect to see more female writers on their op-ed pages. Neither one, however, ran significantly more opinion pieces by women, or featured more regular female columnists, than did their male counterparts.

Where bias does exist, men are not exclusively at fault. Some fascinating studies have documented the extent to which both men *and* women downgrade female work, particularly when they rely on subjective standards of evaluation. In his recent book, *Blink*, Malcolm Gladwell wrote about the impact blind auditions have had on the gender composition of symphony orchestras. Since orchestras started requiring musicians to audition behind screens instead of in full-view, the number of women hired has increased fivefold. A study by economists Cecilia Rouse and Claudia Goldin found that the results are even better for women who play what have been traditionally considered "male" instruments like brass and percussion. The same thing happens in art—in studies that switch the nameplates identifying a male or female artist, both men and women always

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Seventy percent of letters to the editor are written by men. The same consistent 70 percent of callers to talk radio shows (and not testosterone-driven rage-fests, but "Talk of the Nation" and "The Diane Rehm Show" on NPR) are men. A full 75 percent of political blog readers are men.

attach higher value to the painting they assume was created by a man. The same phenomenon that happens in symphony orchestras and art galleries undoubtedly happens to editors, who rely on bylines to form quick judgments about what to expect from authors before they read articles.

So, it's possible—even probable—that passive bias by both male and female editors accounts for some of the gender imbalance on editorial pages. But how much does it explain? There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that something else is at work: self-selection. Relatively few women choose to try their hands at political opinion-making. Here at *The Washington Monthly*, only one out of every 10 submissions we receive is from a woman, and the ratio is even worse among applications for editorial positions; female editorial candidates are out-numbered 20-to-1. *Washington Post* editorial page editor Fred Hiatt told me he sees much the same pattern, estimating that "at least eight out of every 10 op-ed submissions we receive are from men." Collins, his *New York Times* counterpart, thinks it's a matter of the available talent pool: "The pool is weighted toward men....Within that, the number of people who are capable of writing 700 words twice a week and making it sound fresh and interesting...that's a very tiny pool." "Believe me," she says with the sigh of someone who answers this question every day, "I am really, *really* well aware that we have only one woman columnist right now."

To get a sense of how pervasive and consistent the self-selection truly is, you have to look beyond the op-ed pages to other areas of political discourse. Seventy percent of letters to the editor are written by men. The same consistent 70 percent of callers to talk radio shows (and not testosterone-driven rage-fests, but "Talk of the Nation" and "The Diane Rehm Show" on NPR) are men. A full 75 percent of political blog readers are men. Women's voices are not completely missing, but once they reach the invisible—but remarkably stable—threshold of around 25 percent, they disappear from political conversations. Faster than you can say "Larry Summers," some people will take a look at those statistics and conclude that women are innately less interested in offering their political opinions. Perhaps. But the same socialization that leads people to devalue the artistic and written work of women also teaches women that their opinions should be kept to themselves.

Shrinking violets

Any parent can tell you that behavioral differences exist even in infants and that they are often gender-specific. Are there naturally aggressive girls as well as naturally nurturing boys? Of course. But socialization is based on the images we have of the "average" girl or boy; we take what we think we know about how girls and boys act, and then reinforce those ideas through parenting, education, and other cultural influences. When the natural aggressiveness of boys is exacerbated by our own gender stereotypes, what begins as a small gap differentiating girls and boys widens into a gulf. By the time the average girl makes her way through the gauntlet of adolescent conditioning, she is far less likely than her brother to become an idea-warrior.

This came as no surprise to education professors David Sadker and his late wife Myra, whose decades of scientific research form the core of what we know about gender and education. After logging countless hours observing classroom settings—from elementary to high school—they noticed the same thing everywhere they went. Although boys and girls are equally verbal when they enter elementary school, by the time they graduate 13 years later, boys will have spoken far more often in class than girls; the ratio, the Sadkers determined, was an astounding 8-to-1. Conventional wisdom assumes that girls are just naturally more hesitant to answer questions and volunteer ideas. But reams of social science research—including a report by the American Association of University Women that examined more than 1,300 studies on girls and education—show that the difference is due instead to subtle, but firm, lessons about who gets to offer opinions and how.

What researchers found should track closely with memories of your second-grade self. Those are the years in which children learn how to participate in group discussions. The teacher explains that to maintain an orderly conversation and allow everyone to speak, students should raise their hands when they have some-

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thing to say and wait to be called on. Simple enough. But what happens next? Usually, the teacher poses a question to kick off the discussion, and several children raise their hands with answers. As the conversation continues, one or more of the boys, either overly enthusiastic about his point or merely impatient, calls out his comment without waiting to be chosen by the teacher. She might stop him and remind everyone of the rule—raise your hand and wait to be called first—but often she just lets him go ahead. It is less disruptive, after all, than letting him jump up and down, waving his hand, and yelling, "Oooh, ooh, me!" But if a girl bursts out with a thought, the teacher's response changes. The Sadkers report that teachers almost always chastise girls who violate the rules. After all, teachers rely on girls—their "good students"—to remain quiet and maintain order in the classroom while teachers focus on the boys, keeping them in line by drawing them into discussions. And so, as the conversation races around them, girls sit, waiting to be called on, first holding up their tired arms with the other, then lowering them, and finally not bothering to raise their hands at all.

This may not match the image most people have of teenage girls, who seem to have an endless stream of opinions and go through their lives narrating running commentaries of everything around them. But that often ends at the classroom door. Peggy Orenstein spent a year with junior high girls in California while writing *Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self-Esteem, and the Confidence Gap*; she found time and again that girls who were the center of attention in front of their lockers or calling out to friends across the courtyard often became different creatures entirely in class, their posture collapsing behind desks. The reasons are varied—lack of confidence in their ability, fear of appearing too smart and intimidating boys, teacher bias—but the results are usually the same. Even though they have more academic success in junior high and high school than boys, girls are less inclined to take intellectual risks. "Boys never care if they're wrong," one bright teenage girl told Orenstein. "I'm not shy. But it's like, when I get into class, I just.... I just can't talk."

Whatever self-confidence survives high school may not last long for women in college. Boston College professor Karen Arnold has tracked high school valedictorians in Illinois and found that at the time of high school graduation, about one in four of both the girls and boys rated themselves as "far above average" in intelligence compared to others their age. After just two years in college, however, while one in four male valedictorians still said they were above average, only four percent of their female counterparts were willing to rate themselves the same way.

It may be no coincidence that a number of pioneering female opinion columnists—including Meg Greenfield, Molly Ivins, Ellen Goodman, Anna Quindlen, and Jodie Allen—attended women's colleges. Allen, who got her start through Meg Greenfield at the *Post*'s Outlook section and writes a business column for *U.S. News & World Report*, told me that while her college experience was filled with women freely offering opinions, "I bet you if there were men around, we wouldn't have." Even at elite schools, with the most driven, educated young women, the

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All of the women I interviewed who have worked in opinion journalism shared similar stories and frustrations. To even get to this point, we've survived the socialization gauntlet and are more opinionated and driven than most women. But once we get in the boys' club, we find out that's not enough —we also have to play by the boys' rules.

25-percent rule is in place by this point: At the daily newspapers of top-rated universities, only 10 to 25 percent of opinion columnists are female. While women dominate the increasingly popular arena of college sex columns, men are the ones writing pure opinion pieces, what Allen and her colleagues used to call "thumb-suckers." "I think," she says, "men are more likely to think their thumbs are tasty than women are."

Shout fest

If you were to design the ideal socialization model for girls, it would look something like my childhood. The record *Free to Be, You and Me* was permanently affixed to the turntable in our house, and the children's book *Girls Can Be Anything* was a regular in the bedtime rotation. We discussed politics in the kitchen and played baseball (*not* softball) after dinner. I'll be the first to admit that I was a weird kid, with no lack of confidence (in fact, my parents had to sit me down in kindergarten and explain why it wasn't okay to turn in my assignments pre-graded, complete with gold stars and "Very good, Amy!" penned at the top, even if I did think it was saving my teacher the trouble). I was one of the few high school girls in history who thought that being smart was not only acceptable, but would also actually make me more attractive to my male classmates. Although deathly shy, I dominated class discussions and generally made a know-it-all nuisance of myself.

Now that I edit the type of publication that serves as a feeder for major newspapers and magazines in search of columnists, I've seen plenty to convince me that self-selection is a major reason that women's voices are generally absent from our pages—I can count on one hand the number of pitches I have received from women. But it's also clear to me that this profession is tougher than it needs to be for women. I've interviewed a dozen women who have worked in opinion journalism over several decades, and we all have similar stories and frustrations. To even get to this point, we've survived the socialization gauntlet and are more opinionated and driven than most women. But once we get in the boys' club, we find out that's not enough—we also have to play by the boys' rules.

Almost every woman I talked to dreads editorial meetings, the time when writers float their ideas and vigorously debate the content of future issues. The meetings can be intellectually stimulating and exhilarating, but they also involve a lot of yelling, with each writer fighting to be heard. For many women who have become writers precisely because they find it easier to argue in a written format, the meetings can be exhausting. If she's willing to yell, and to keep yelling until everyone stops and listens to her, she then gets to defend her proposed article against withering attacks from colleagues who are trained to tear it apart (and sometimes see the exercise as sport). If "not interesting, not new, not worth publishing" is the declared verdict, she is supposed to persist in efforts to convince the room. But it takes sterner stuff than most of us are made of to set your shoulders for one more go-'round and head back into the fray. While there are outliers, the average woman just doesn't enjoy full-contact political sparring as much as the average man.

Gail Collins is optimistic that the gender gap in punditry is nothing that a little time and socialization can't change. "I don't think this will last," she told the *Los Angeles Times* last month. "The person in my job in 15 or 20 years I don't think will be having this conversation." But socialization doesn't end in the classroom—even at the level of elite journalism, well-intentioned men and women reinforce male norms when it comes to assigning stories, promoting women on the cover, or ghettoizing women as culture writers. It may be that Michael Kinsley, in a recent column addressing this issue, has come closest to the solution: "Everyone involved should be trying harder, including me."

I tell people all the time that I have the greatest job in the world, and most days it's true. I get paid to talk about politics, noodle over ideas and theories with brilliant colleagues, and then weave words into melodies and themes that are as close as I will ever come to writing music. To succeed, I have learned to adapt: to yell even though I hate yelling, to keep a check on my more personal writing style, and to aggressively and stubbornly defend my ideas. It works, but it leaves me winded. Sometimes, just sometimes, I wish we could all simply raise our hands. ◆

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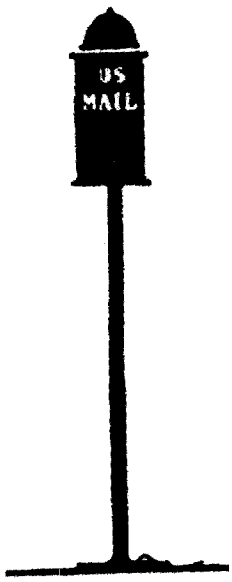


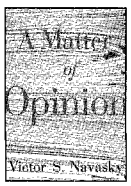
Going Postal

Washington's recurring attempts to squeeze small magazines out of business.

By Victor S. Navasky

When I heard recently about the United States Postal Service's plans to hold hearings on hiking rates for periodical class mail—the bulk postage class which gives lower postal rates to magazines—it reminded me of the day in 1995 when I returned to the offices of *The Nation* after an executive training program at the Harvard Business School. I had been editing the magazine for 16 years when Arthur Carter, then the publisher, made me an offer I should have refused and sold me the magazine for money I didn't have. As I was making the transition from editor to publisher, imagine then my consternation on returning from Harvard to discover that the postal service had recommended the abolition of the the discounted mail class for periodicals. All of my new financial projections, I feared, would go up in smoke. We survived that round, but now I am worried again. If implemented, higher postal rates, whether the originally rumored 15 percent increase or the recently rumored "6% solution," could bankrupt many small circulation magazines. Although any change in rates would probably not go into effect until 2006, it seems to me that now is the time for the independent press community and all those who care about the free flow of information to mobilize.

In the mid-1980s, at a conference on the role of journals of opinion that we co-sponsored with the journalism department at the University of Southern California, I made a point of putting postal matters at the top of the agenda, since keeping postage costs under control was one of the few issues around which journals of the left, right, and center might organize to mutual advantage. Robert Myers, a former publisher of *The New Republic*, told us about how, in the 1960s, he had put together a group of small-circulation magazines whose purpose was precisely to promote their common postal interests and which had even come up with a constructive proposal that he persuaded congressman Morris Udall to introduce as legislation: that the first 250,000 copies (in Udall's bill, it was only 25,000) of all publications be mailable at reduced rates. That way, smaller publications and journals with heavy content (perhaps for reasons of high seriousness) would get the largest proportional benefit, but all magazines would get some benefit. Alas, the legislation



Victor S. Navasky, the publisher of *The Nation*, is the author of *A Matter of Opinion* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux; May 2005), from which this article is excerpted. Copyright 2005, Victor Navasky.

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never got anywhere.

The most articulate opposition to government help for small magazines came, surprisingly, from our friend Michael Kinsley, who had already come out against the second-class mail "subsidy," as he called it, in a 1975 article in *The Washington Monthly*. At the conference he boiled his continuing objections down to three: Since the readership of journals like *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, and *National Review* were largely drawn from the highly educated elite, whose income was above average, the second-class subsidy therefore amounted to "a transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich." Second, the camel's nose of government got into the tent of subsidizing opinion journals, Kinsley argued, content requirements would be inevitably hooked to the subsidy, raising profound First Amendment concerns; and, third, since opinion journalists were supposed to be watchdogs against special interests, it was wrong for us to become one ourselves. Kinsley observed that right-wingers should oppose such subsidies because they interfered with the free market, and left-wingers because they were regressive.

It was a virtuoso performance, and Kinsley, his forensic skills sharpened by hundreds of hours on "Crossfire," had my vote as captain of the debate team. But then Tom Silk, the lawyer who successfully defended *Mother Jones* when the Reagan administration challenged its nonprofit tax status, made a telling point. Some things are too important to leave to the vicissitudes of the market, like national defense and clean air—even Kinsley conceded that these two were "public goods"—and public discourse and the dissemination of literature were two more.

And so, in 1995, when the trade press reported that the Postal Service (USPS) wanted to abolish second-class mail, my first impulse was to write an op-ed piece denouncing that agency. But that, I quickly realized, was the writer in me wanting to sound off. Now that I was a publisher (ahem) I had bigger guns to deploy. As a member of the Magazine Publishers Association (MPA), I assumed my trade group would be up in arms. So imagine my further consternation when I discovered that not only was the MPA not interested in challenging the USPS proposal, they were supporting it.

I had foolishly believed that since the MPA has a membership of 250 magazines, and since most of these magazines have circulations of 250,000 or under, they would represent their members' interest. No such luck; 20 percent of the MPA's members are responsible for 80 percent of its budget. Karl Marx was out of fashion, but he would surely have reminded me that if I had simply looked at the figures, I could have predicted MPA's position, the position of the mega-publishers, the position of Time Warner and Dow Jones.

Lacking a trade association to make my case, I reverted to my writerly habit and went to the local library to see whether there was indeed a case to make and discovered a great deal of interest. First, Americans are lucky that when the British decided to clamp down on the colonies they did it via the Stamp Act. This provoked opposition from angry printers, because it curtailed their civil liberties and cost them money. Print was so central to the routine of colonial life that the public sphere itself—civil society as they knew it—seemed in peril. Early American governments spent a great deal of money building and maintaining the post roads, and politicians from all camps agreed to sustain the preferential low postage rates for newspapers that Franklin had established.

I also discovered that an organization called the American Business Press, representing mostly trade magazines, the vast majority of them with circulations well under 250,000, was pressing to retain the second-class category and keep the periodical subsidy, as Kinsley had called it, alive and well. I contacted their attorneys to find out what there was to find out, and to see whether there was a way *The Nation* and other journals of opinion might be heard.

The Business Press and our little anti-business magazine had, as Jesse Jackson might have put it, common ground. The attorneys for ABP were willing to share their research, leak the other side's documents, and generally connive and conspire to help us bolster our case. Not only that, but although the proceedings were well under way before the Postal Rate Commission (PRC), which was charged under byzantine rules with holding hearings on the USPS proposals and then making recommendations to the Service's board of governors—most of them Reagan and Bush appointees—and although many hours of testimony already had been taken, they explained that if I were willing to testify as a "rebuttal" witness on behalf of ABP, I could appear before the Rate Commission in person and make my case on behalf of journals of opinion as a class.

How could I say no? As I prepared for the big event, I was told that the commission had scheduled nine witnesses for that day, and my own appearance would probably take no longer than 20 minutes, a half hour at most.

I had previously testified before one congressional committee (as a witness on behalf of the ACLU), urging the adoption of a national shield law that would protect book authors as well as reporters from having to reveal their sources. My testimony was received and read into the record, I was thanked by the chairman, asked a few desultory questions by the late Rep. Ben Rosen, a friend of a friend, and dismissed. It took all of 10 minutes. But my appearance before the PRC lasted three hours, for the chairman announced as soon as I had finished my testimony that among those participants who had requested oral cross-examination of

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The Founding Fathers saw the dissemination of opinion as a precondition of self-governance. And they saw the post as the circulatory system of our democracy.

witness Navasky were the Office of the Consumer Advocate, Time Warner, Dow Jones & Co., the Magazine Publishers of America, and the U.S. Postal Service.

What followed helped remind me why I was glad I had never practiced law, and why they call it an adversary system. The thrust of my testimony had to do with why I believed the proposed elimination of the second-class-mail category would wound all journals of opinion, regardless of creed. In dollar terms the so-called reform would save millions in costs for magazines with mega-circulation like *People* and *TV Guide* (because of their ability to "pre-sort" and "drop-ship"—by this time I had internalized and incorporated the postal lingo into my pitch), but it would cost magazines like *Commonweal* or *Human Events* or *The Nation* something like 20 percent more than they were already paying (in *The Nation*'s case this came to an extra $160,000 a year).

My strategy was to try to seize the high ground and give a brief lecture on postal history.

The Founding Fathers saw the dissemination of opinion as a precondition of self-governance. And they saw the post as the circulatory system of our democracy. That's why Benjamin Franklin agreed to serve as Deputy Postmaster General. That's why Thomas Jefferson sought to persuade President Washington to appoint Tom Paine, author of such polemics/masterpieces of opinion journalism as *Common Sense* and *The Rights of Man* as Postmaster General. That is why Washington himself believed that all newspapers, which in those days were the equivalent of journals of opinion, should be delivered free of charge. That is why, in 1879, Congress established reduced rates for newspapers and magazines which, because they were understood as critical to the enlightenment of the Republic, were never expected to pay their own way.

For nearly two centuries, this philosophy prevailed. Only in recent decades has the notion that dissemination of independent opinion is essential to make democracy work begun to give way to bottom-line considerations.

It would be a tragedy if at this moment of unprecedented concentration in communications conglomerates, one of the few remaining institutions dedicated to the creation, propagation, circulation, and testing of new policy ideas—the journal of opinion—should become the casualty of lobbying by the very forces which make it more

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The real philosophical point—that journals of opinion should not be required to pay their own way—has not yet re-entered the national dialogue.

important than ever before that these independent voices—whatever their politics—be heard.

I did not expect, but I got a detailed interrogation on Ben Franklin's motives and Tom Paine's employment history. I don't know how to convey the flavor of the exchange without reproducing it.

KEEGAN (lawyer for Time Warner): Do you think Jefferson's recommendation of Paine might have had something to do with the fact that Paine was an ardent Republican and an ardent admirer of France, that is, of Jefferson's party?

ME: Absolutely. But there were many ardent Republicans and none of them wrote *Common Sense* or *Crisis* except Tom Paine . . . (At this point I self-aggrandizingly noted that I had been the recipient of the Tom Paine Award for civil liberties 10 years earlier; so I harbored a special affection for him. I didn't mention that the award was bestowed by the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee.)

KEEGAN: If it eventuated to be the fact that at the same time Jefferson made that recommendation, he was actively trying to get Washington to transfer authority over the postal service from Secretary of the Treasury Hamilton to Secretary of State Jefferson, would that lead you to suspect that his motives for trying to persuade Washington to accept a Republican Postmaster General were at least more complicated than . . .

ME: I think all human motives are complicated and Jefferson's were more so than most.

KEEGAN: Uh-huh.

ME: But the reason that Tom Paine was singled out was that he probably was the foremost pamphleteer and passionate exponent of opinion journalism of his day and was famous for mobilizing sentiment in the colonies against the Crown. I also think one of the reasons he published *Common Sense* as a pamphlet was because there were problems with the postal system in getting it [distributed]. That is why Jefferson thought he was sensitive to [postal matters].

KEEGAN: Do you know whether Paine ever held a job he was not fired from or did not have to abandon in disgrace?

ME: He was a troublemaker, a dissenter with a fiery personality, and it took those kinds of people to make the revolution that gave us our independence from the British.

Then Keegan asked me, as I expected, "It is a fact, isn't it, that newspapers were given preferential rates initially and magazines not, other periodicals were not?" I noted that the acknowledged authority on these matters wrote that Congress reserved the most privileged rate for newspapers, many of them avowedly political journals, and that the reason he used the word "journals" was that there was an ambiguity about the difference between newspapers and magazines, and in fact a lot of magazines disguised themselves as newspapers to get the benefit of the lower rates.

When I mentioned that the young apprentice printer Ben Franklin consciously set out to imitate Addison's writings from *The Spectator*, Keegan asked me, "Is it your understanding Addison's *Spectator* would have qualified for second-class rates?" This was a trick question, since magazines got no preferential treatment until 1852. So we sparred, and I repeated, "The preference did not include magazines, although newspapers, as I said, were modeled after a magazine, *The Spectator*. This was an oversight they finally got around to correcting. During that period you had this strange thing where a lot of magazines presented themselves in the format of newspapers."

Keegan sought to reassure the commissioners that he had only one more page of testimony on which to cross-examine me, and the chairman, who was clearly having an okay time, demurred: "Please, Mr. Keegan, this is probably the most interesting and understandable cross-examination that any of us have ever been party to here. And the only problem I find with it is that it encourages me to want to leave and go home and read books rather than stay here and read testimony."

Next came Mr. McBride from Dow Jones. Mr. McBride had earlier let me know privately that it was his brother Joseph who had written the newsmaking *Nation* article about the possibility that President George H.W. Bush had been in the CIA prior to becoming its director, in which case he had perjured himself at his confirmation hearing, where he denied previous agency involvement. McBride's goal, if I understood his badgering questions correctly, seemed to be to use *The Nation*'s ratio of advertising to

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editorial content to catch me out. My general defense was that "it costs us 10.4 cents to physically produce a copy of our magazine and it costs us 16 cents to mail it.

MS. GORDON (the consumer advocate): Do you think the editorial matter in your publication is more valuable to society than, say, the editorial matter in *People*?

Well, of course I do, but not even I was stupid enough to say so. What I said instead was:

"I'll put it this way. My wife reads *People* before she reads *The Nation*. We get along very well and I respect that interest of hers and it enriches her life to know what's going on. It doesn't happen to be my interest, and so we benefit from each other's different reading patterns. Sure, I prefer policy journalism, and I am more interested in reading Bill Kristol's new magazine [*The Weekly Standard*] than in reading *People*. It is a complicated question because...to me it is critical that the print culture survives. To the extent that people read *People* rather than watch television, I think our culture is better off. It is a personal prejudice."

I quote these colloquies to show the harassment which citizens who believe (rightly or wrongly) they are testifying in the public interest can be made to suffer. Commissioner LeBlanc wanted to know whether *The Nation*, like another small publisher who testified earlier, would consider dropping some of its subscribers to avoid the extra cost if new regulations went into effect that charged higher delivery rates to magazines with fewer than 24 readers in any zip-code area?

ME: I would do everything in my power not to be driven to do that.

COMMISSIONER LEBLANC: Very tactful answer. That was good.... My personal reading is "binding the nation together" is still important. So if you drop someone from a list like that, is that necessarily "binding the nation together"?

ME: No ... and it is not just a matter of dropping one person. It is really dropping either the least advantaged or the people who are most isolated. To me these are the people for whom journals like this are a lifeline.

In the end, after months of hearings, briefs, witnesses, rebuttal witnesses (me), reply briefs, and such, the PRC made its recommendations to the Board of Governors, which agreed with them. For the first time in the history of the U.S. postal bureaucracy, the PRC recognized the importance of the journal of opinion as a separate category.

To make a complex ruling simple, they changed the name of second class to periodicals class, but did not break it up to give the mega-few an advantage over the small-circulation many. A mini-victory for our side!

But the real philosophical point—that journals of opinion should not be required to pay their own way—had not yet re-entered the national dialogue. Bob Sherrill had explained way back in 1970 in *The Nation* that the so-called efficiency that market economics is supposed to provide often works against the poor: "Excusing themselves on the ground of efficiency, the railroads cut out 'unprofitable' passenger service; telephone companies avoid so far as possible the servicing of any but the more populated areas; and airlines drop routes and schedules. At present, the postal service costs the taxpayers about $1 billion above the costs that are paid by stamp sales. This is hardly a drain, when compared to the $3 billion in agricultural subsidies and the $120 billion in defense subsidies. And yet the great cry from postal references has been the need to 'break even.'"

In the 10 years since those hearings, the Independent Press Association, a San Francisco– based MPA-type outfit for the little guy, has signed up 400 small-circulation magazines, and the IPA now appears before the PRC on behalf of all of them. So, let's hope that this time around IPA's stance gets a hearing beyond the PRC's hearing room. All citizens, not just publishers, editors, writers, and readers of these journals, have a stake in the sort of elevated public discourse that they occasionally exemplify. ◆

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Pinkertons at the CPA

Iraq's resurgent labor unions could have helped rebuild the country's civil society. The Bush administration, of course, tried to crush them.

By Matthew Harwood

On Jan. 4, labor union leader Hadi Saleh returned to his Baghdad home after work. Five masked men laid in wait. After he entered, they jumped him, blind-folded him, and bound his hands and feet. The intruders beat and burnt Saleh on his torso and head and then choked him to death with an electrical cord. Before they left, the men strafed Saleh's body with bullets. His membership files were ransacked. This wasn't everyday violence. Saleh was, at the time of his death, international secretary of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) and a strong player in Iraq's born-again labor movement once crushed by Saddam Hussein. The labor leader's killers are widely suspected to be remnants of Hussein's secret police, the Mukhabarat. Saleh's slaying was the most high-profile attack on Iraqi labor officials, many of whom continue to be kidnapped and killed with impunity by the insurgents. In recent months, two more trade unionists have been murdered, one while he was walking home with his children.

There is good reason for insurgents to take on the trade unionists. The IFTU supports a secular state, representative of Shi'a, Sunni, and Kurd. Its leaders have called for the insurgency to end. The union has endorsed U.N. Resolution 1546, which sets the time table for Iraq's transition into a democracy. The group was one of comparatively few in Iraq to back the American-appointed Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's interim government, the continued presence of coalition soldiers for security, and the Jan. 30 elections. Right before the elections, the IFTU's Foreign Representative Abdullah Muhsin emailed me a simple and direct view of their importance: "[T]he elections in Iraq are essential to avoid a brutal assault by reactionary forces." The Iraqi labor movement, in other words, had been a consistent enemy of the insurgency, and a strong proponent of a free, self-governing Iraq.

Saleh's murder is more than just a sign of the frailty of Iraq's move towards democracy. It's also an apt example of how Iraq's labor movement has fared under U.S. control. Americans have largely left the Iraqi unions to fend for themselves, and in some cases actively undercut them. As a result, Iraq has been significantly deprived of the movement perhaps most willing and best equipped to nurture along a nascent national democracy in a religiously and ethnically divided country: organized labor.

From Poland to Brazil to post-apartheid South Africa, organized labor has played a critical role in helping new democracies emerge and stabilize. America's own history of successful occupation teaches the same lesson. After the Japanese surrender in World War II, the country's newly-appointed premier knocked on the door of Gen. Douglas MacArthur and was greeted

Matthew Harwood is an editorial fellow of *The Washington Monthly* and author of www.woodshavingsdaily.blogspot.com.

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In January an Iraqi labor union leader was beaten, burnt, and choked to death by members of an insurgency he opposed. His demise—both tragic and hardly noticed— is an example of how the country's emerging labor movement has fared under American occupation.

with a memorandum outlining the framework for Japan's democratization. First on the list was the "emancipation of the women of Japan through their enfranchisement." Second was "the encouragement of the unionization of Labor."

Had the American administrators in Iraq followed MacArthur's model and placed a similar emphasis on nurturing labor, that move alone would not have turned Iraq into a stable, civil society. But given the history of labor in emerging democracies and the dearth of other nation-building alternatives in Iraq, sheltering and encouraging a union movement ought to have been pretty close to first in the reconstruction playbook. Instead, it seems to have come somewhere near last.

Saddam's legal legacy

Iraq's contemporary labor movement was founded during the 1920s and played a crucial role in overthrowing the British-supported monarchy in 1958. The nation's unions had never coexisted very easily with the Ba'ath movement. While the Ba'ath Party preached a secular pan-Arabism organized on fascist lines, the Communist-inflected labor movement advocated a socialism inclusive of all ethnic and religious backgrounds. Whether someone was a Shiite, a Sunni, or a Kurd didn't matter according to the prevailing ideologies—what mattered was whether they were workers. For this, "the Iraqi Communist Party was viewed as selfless modernizers by the people, willing to sacrifice themselves for their beliefs in social justice," Iraq historian Peter Sluglett of the University of Utah told me. While both Communists and Ba'athists helped lead the 1958 revolution against Iraq's royal family, they split soon afterwards, largely over the Ba'ath concept of *wahda*, or Arab unity, which excluded Kurds and other non-Arabs, critical members of the Communist coalition. So, when the Ba'ath wrestled control of the state in the coup of 1963, they systematically set out to eliminate their only real rival, the Communists. Seeing the labor movement as essentially red, the Ba'ath would stage intermittent purges of the trade unions for a decade and a half.

When Saddam finally consolidated political control of the country in 1979, things got much worse for labor. The new president immediately stepped up the persecution of dissidents in the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU), Iraq's most powerful union, intimidating and torturing workers to flesh out dissidents, and appointing loyal apparatchiks to key positions. (The Saddam-controlled labor union was for a time in the 1980s headed by Ali Hassan al-Majid, the Hussein loyalist who would later become infamous as the war criminal "Chemical Ali.") In 1987, Saddam decided he couldn't abide even this arrangement, and effectively banned trade unions in the public sector, where the majority of people worked. In response, organized labor went underground with a small cadre of activists and true believers collecting information on the regime's crimes and funneling it to the West, where many of the movement's leaders, now in exile, were agitating for regime change.

So by March 2003, when the first American and allied tanks rolled into Iraq, laborites there, who had been hoping for Saddam's overthrow for decades, were mostly cheering. By mid-May, the IFTU arose out of the labor movement that had resisted Saddam for more than two decades. Composed of liberals, nationalists, and communists who represented Iraq's Mueslix-like mixture of ethnicity and faith, the IFTU was one of the few existing organizations in Iraq whose membership crossed sectarian lines.

But from the time the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) took possession of Iraq, the Americans running the country not only declined to engage the labor movement in the process of building a nation, but also worked actively to undermine labor's ability to play a constructive role.

First, during his tenure, CPA chief L. Paul Bremer repealed virtually the whole Iraqi legal structure with his so-called 100 Orders. He did not, however, repeal Saddam's 1987 Labor Code, which forfeited the right of public sector workers to bargain collectively. That decision, though deeply foolish for purposes of nation-building, made perfect sense to the movement ideologues staffing the U.S. occupation. Much of the CPA's effort in Baghdad was devoted to helping create a conservative's ideal state, complete with a 15 percent flat tax on individual and corporate income. Bremer's crew was so zealous that they tried, in September 2003, to privatize virtually the whole economy—200 state-owned firms. Legalizing

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Much of the CPA's effort in Baghdad was devoted to creating a conservative's ideal state, including privatizing most of the economy—200 state-owned firms. Legalizing labor unions would not have been helpful, to say the least, to these privatization plans.

labor unions would not have been helpful, to say the least, to these privatization plans. As Bjorn Brandtzaeg, a former CPA team leader for trade and industry, wrote in the *Financial Times*, "Instead of focusing on restarting the main industrial complexes as soon as possible after the end of hostilities, a team of ideologically motivated CPA officials with close ties to the US administration pursued a narrow privatization strategy. The result...[s]everal hundred thousand people remained out of work."

Ironically, and perhaps predictably, this U.S.-engineered unemployment helped undermine the administration's privatization plans. Iraqi workers feared privatization would worsen unemployment, seeing that overseas subcontractors were already importing cheap skilled foreign workers for jobs that Iraqis believed were rightfully theirs. Massive protests organized by Iraqi labor unions ensued. Bowing to labor's demands, the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) petitioned the CPA to forestall privatization until a democratically elected government of Iraqis had assumed power. The CPA reluctantly heeded their advice.

The clash over privatization didn't exactly improve the U.S. attitude towards Iraq's labor unions. In late 2003, the CPA refused to unfreeze union assets, which the IFTU argued were rightfully theirs. In a 2004 interview with Scotland's *Morning Call*, the IFTU's General Secretary Subhi Abdullah Mashadani complained, "It's not Bremer's money, it is not CPA money—it is our money."

The truth is a bit more complicated. The IFTU is claiming ownership of the assets of the old GFTU, the once free and independent union that Saddam transformed into a "yellow union" by executing and imprisoning its leadership and appointing apparatchiks throughout its hierarchy. From then on, the GFTU functioned as an "extension of the party and the state," according to Harry Kamberis of the AFL-CIO's Solidarity Center, which provides training and assistance to labor unions in emerging democracies, including to the IFTU. The GFTU still survives in Iraq, leaving it and the IFTU to fight over the frozen assets. As Abdulwahab Alkebsi of the National Endowment for Democracy told me, bad blood exists between the two unions because the "GFTU represented the status quo underneath Saddam and therefore had the assets." The IFTU contends that the GFTU remains Ba'athist, while the GFTU claims it has cleansed itself of any regime residue.

Their struggle aside, there's no clear rationale for why, after two years of occupation, a decision or compromise couldn't have been made that released at least some of the assets to deserving unions—especially since six of the 12 IFTU constituent unions democratically elected their leadership. (When I asked why the U.S. government hadn't come to a decision on the union assets, the State Department's press office replied that the "Iraq office [was] not able to speak on this issue.")

The U.S. government further signaled its attitude towards Iraqi labor unions in early December 2003 when coalition troops stormed the IFTU headquarters in Baghdad, ransacked their offices, arrested eight union workers, and shut down the office. Within a day, the arrested were released uncharged from Al Muthan airbase, but IFTU headquarters remained shut for seven months. The jailed men accused the United States of relying on information provided by a member of Saddam's old regime, Abdullah Murad Ghny, who owns a major private transport company whose workers had begun to organize. While in jail, Turkey Al Lehabey, the General Secretary of the Communication and Transport Workers Union, an IFTU affiliate, said a local American commander named Kelly had told the men, "Iraq has no sovereignty and no political parties or trade unions. We do not want you to organize in either the north or south transport stations." He added, "You can organize only after June 2004; for now, you have an American governor."

The raid had Muhsin and his followers equating American intimidation with Ba'athist repression. "They saw how Saddam Hussein brutalized the labor movement," Muhsin told me, "and then, [when] they saw the American forces come under the slogan of liberation, [they felt that they were] being terrorized by the same forces and not given a reason why." The State Department declined repeated offers to comment on any questions relating to the raid and how it perceived the IFTU's role in an independent Iraq; nevertheless, it seems clear that the CPA didn't exactly consider the union a partner.

Union cards and national unity

What's especially maddening about the U.S. govern-

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ment's attitude towards the IFTU is that organized labor has repeatedly played a vital stabilizing and democratizing role in situations that, in some cases, come close to that which Iraq finds itself in today. In Poland, Solidarity quickly evolved from a labor crusade into a social movement that peacefully brought down the communist regime and, once in power, established a system of regular, free elections. The trade-union movement in Brazil had a similar effect, helping to end 21 years of oppressive military rule and usher in 15 years of representative government. But perhaps the most significant precursor comes from South Africa. There, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) not only agitated for the release of Nelson Mandela from prison, but, as the apartheid government was losing power, helped keep the country from splintering along racial and tribal lines. "Labor organizations are based on social class identity and as a result cut across divisions of tribe and culture so that you'll find Zulu and Xhosa workers of COSATU," said Professor Mike Bratton of Michigan State University. "In that sense, COSATU is one of the major organizations that helps build a sense of national, non-tribal identity." Instructively, all of these countries have remained democracies: According to Freedom House's annual survey, each country is ranked "free" in its commitment to both political rights and civil liberties.

Groups like the IFTU, then, are precisely what Iraq needs to make a successful transition to stable self-government. Iraqi political leaders seem to understand this. In January 2004, the Iraqi Governing Council recognized the IFTU as "the legitimate and legal representatives of the labor movement in Iraq." America's allies in Iraq also seem to get it. By March of that year, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, speaking before the House of Commons, named the IFTU as the legitimate representative of Iraq's labor movement, England's union partner in the rebuilding of the war-tattered nation.

Even the Bush administration seems to have come around, at least a bit. In January of 2004, one month after the U.S. military raid on the IFTU offices, the president devoted a few lines of his State of the Union speech to acknowledging trade unions as a crucial component of democratization. "I will send you a proposal to double the budget of the National Endowment for Democracy" Bush told Congress, "and to focus its new work on the development of free elections, and free markets, free press, and free labor unions in the Middle East." Yet while Bush announced that the building of free trade unions would henceforth be official U.S. policy, the priority that policy has since been given can be seen in the budget numbers. The National Endowment for Democracy has spent $1.5 million for Iraq's free trade union movement—compared with the total of $40 million the State Department and Defense Intelligence Agency gave Ahmed Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress.

Years from now, when historians try to figure out what precisely went wrong in the American occupation of Iraq and why, there will be many candidates: the failure to win enough international support; insufficient numbers of ground troops; the decision to ignore plans drawn up by experienced nation-building experts outside the Pentagon. But somewhere on the list will be the administration's indifference, indeed hostility, to Iraqi organized labor. The Iraqi people are paying a price for that attitude. ◆

Photo courtesy of Iraqi Federation of Worker's Trade Unions

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Swing Conservative

The perilous bipartisanship of Lindsey Graham.

By Geoff Earle

Illustration by Fred Harper

Once news of the abuse at Abu Ghraib broke last April, it took just four days for the Senate Armed Services Committee to summon Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to testify. It took about five seconds after that for the committee's Democrats to start licking their chops. Take down the president's defense secretary, the conventional wisdom held, and Bush's standing as a wartime leader—and, presumably, the campaign resting squarely upon it—would crumble. Democrats wouldn't even have to do the dirty work because there was a Republican on the committee who was known to dislike Rumsfeld as much as any Democrat. And not just any Republican, but the most popular member of his party in the country and perhaps the only politician whose credibility on military issues overshadowed Rumsfeld's: Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.).

Every sign pointed towards a knockout blow by McCain. Because of his experience as a Vietnam POW, the Arizona Republican had every reason to be incensed by evidence that U.S. personnel had tortured captured Iraqis. With Democrats calling for the secretary's resignation, any public show of lost confidence from McCain might mortally wound the secretary's chances of surviving the scandal. Before the hearing, McCain was spotted chatting amiably with Sens. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) and Carl Levin (D-Mich.), the committee's senior Democrat, and the cognoscenti nodded at what was certainly a sign of cooperation to come. Moreover, because all three major networks were broadcasting the hearings live, the whole country could watch.

But if Democrats were expecting McCain to pin responsibility for Abu Ghraib on the defense secretary, they were soon disappointed. When it was time for McCain to question Rumsfeld, he merely jabbed testily, focusing on the minutiae of the scandal, such as who was in charge of the interrogations and what their instructions had been. There were flashes of McCain's well-known temper, particularly when he insisted that Rumsfeld—not his subordinates—answer his questions. But the only noteworthy moment was a comical one: The secretary and Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Richard Myers realized that the chart illustrating the chain of command had been left back at the Pentagon. ("Oh my," mumbled Rumsfeld. "'Oh my' is right," replied Myers.) After McCain finished, the hearing quickly settled into a predictable groove with some Republicans minimizing the scandal as the work of a few bad apples and Democrats offering stern lectures.

Then Chairman John Warner (R-Va.) turned the floor over to Lindsey Graham, a boyish-looking Republican from South Carolina barely a year into his first term filling the Senate seat of Strom Thurmond after eight years in the House. Graham won his Senate

Geoff Earle is a staff writer for *The Hill* newspaper.

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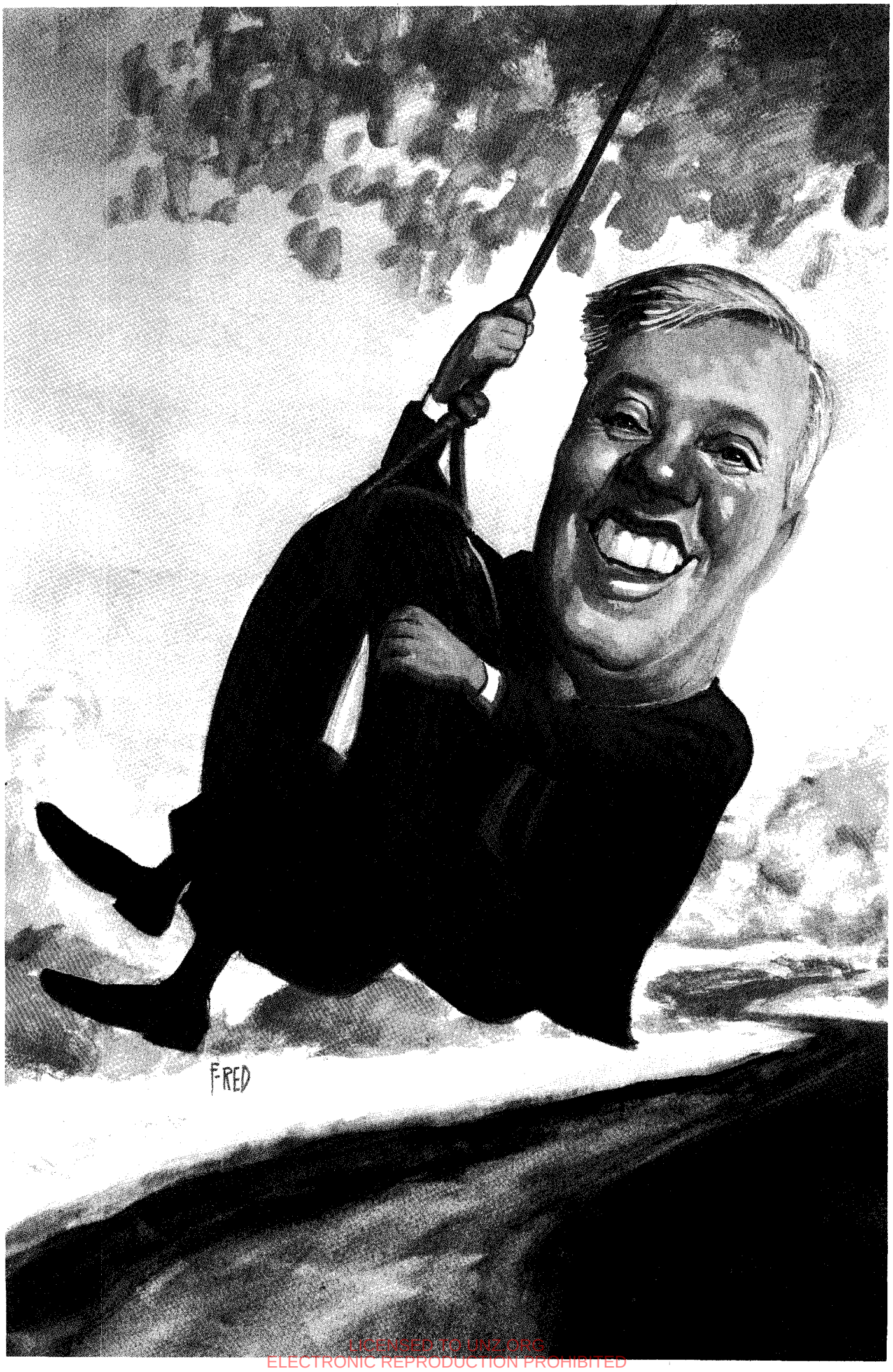

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seat with a pledge to support the president's war on terror and since taking office he had been a steady advocate of the Iraq War. Unlike McCain, he had never taken issue with the Pentagon's leadership. There was little reason for Rumsfeld to believe that Graham's questions would be much different from those of any other Republican.

Graham had other ideas. Dispensing with the time-wasting custom of an introductory statement, Graham launched straight into an interrogation. After putting Rumsfeld on his heels with a question about an unreleased video depicting torture, Graham cut straight to the chase. "Secretary Rumsfeld, people are calling for your resignation.... Do you have the ability, in your opinion, to come to Capitol Hill and carry the message and carry the water for the Department of Defense? Do you believe, based on all the things that have happened and that will happen, that you're able to carry out your duties in a bipartisan manner?"

It was the first time all hearing anyone had even uttered the word "resignation," and Rumsfeld shifted in his seat. "Well, it's a fair question. Um." Rumsfeld paused, before starting an uncharacteristically clumsy stall. "Certainly since this firestorm has been raging it's a question that I've given a lot of thought to. [Pause] The key question for me is the one you posed, and that is whether or not I can be effective. [Pause] Uh, we've got tough tasks ahead. [Pause] The [pause] people in the [pause] department [pause] military and civilian [pause] are doing enormously important work here [pause] uh, and in countries all over the world. And [pause] the, the issue is, uh, can [pause] I [pause] be effective in assisting them in their important tasks." Finally, Rumsfeld found the answer he had been looking for. "Needless to say, if I felt I could not be effective, I'd resign in a minute. [Eight-second pause.] I would not resign simply because people try to make a political issue out of it."

That night, Graham's questioning of Rumsfeld was shown on all three networks' evening news broadcasts, and made the front pages of the next day's *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times*. On Sunday, it was Graham, not McCain, who appeared on "Meet the Press" alongside Warner, Levin, and Gen. Wesley Clark. (McCain was relegated to the third-tier "FOX News Sunday.") A few days later, *The New York Times* ran a story on Graham's role entitled, "Senator's Pointed Questions Get to the Heart of the Matter."

Since last summer, Graham has felt increasingly free to stray from party doctrine and reach across the aisle on key issues. Last month, he signaled that he would not support the extension of some of the president's tax cuts. And in his biggest role so far, Graham is now attempting to win moderate Democratic support for a version of Social-Security reform legislation that would combine private accounts with an increase in the cap on payroll taxes. Graham's freelancing has given rise to a joke making the rounds of South Carolina's political circles that even with the retirement of Fritz Hollings, "We have a Democratic senator—Lindsey Graham." To some, it's more than a joke. Dick Harpootlian, who chaired the South Carolina State Democratic Party when Graham ran for the Senate, recently sent the GOP senator a $1,000 campaign donation.

Democrats used to reserve this kind of affection for moderates. But Lindsey Graham is no moderate. He came to Washington as a Newt Gingrich acolyte, served as a House manager of President Bill Clinton's impeachment trial, and is pro-life, pro-gun, and pro-tax cut. According to the standard-bearing American Conservative Union, Graham has voted for the conservative position 91 percent of the time since coming to Congress in 1995, identical to the rating with which Strom Thurmond retired.

Neither is Graham a maverick like McCain, someone hated by some of his GOP colleagues for his tendency, as one Republican senator described it to me, to "mount the parapet and wave the flag and take the pin out of the grenade." Rather, most GOP senators seem genuinely to like and respect Graham. Indeed, everyone seems to love him. Part of it is just Graham's personality. He carries none of the airs that surround many of his colleagues. His self-deprecating wit and aw-shucks Southern charm are hard to dislike. While not short on ambition, he shares credit with his colleagues and keeps his ego in check by pointing frequently to his own shortcomings.

But there's more than personal charm behind the South Carolinian's sudden rise to bipartisan stardom. Graham has discovered a new niche in the Senate, one opened by last November's elections. During Bush's first term, control of the Senate hung on a one-vote margin, and those senators in the middle held power. With the two parties almost evenly divided, victory on the most contentious issues depended on securing the votes of a small group of moderates—on the Democratic side, senators such as Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) and the now retired John Breaux (D-La.); on the Republican side, lawmakers such as Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Lincoln Chafee (R-R.I.)—or the mavericks such as McCain and collaborators such as Zell Miller (D-Ga.). But in a 55-45 GOP Senate, the moderates, mavericks, and turncoats have lost most of their clout, and the fulcrum of deal-making power has shifted to the right.

Democrats know that to have any chance of affecting or killing a piece of legislation, they must not only win over McCain and the moderates, but also pick off a conservative or two. On the Republican side, those who can maintain credibility with the White House and Senate leadership and at the same time work with Democrats to maximize their influence are the ones in the best position to broker compromises. These dealmakers represent a new species on Capitol Hill: call them "swing conservatives."

Several solid GOP senators have moved into this category. Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.) has done so on immigration, Social Security, and a few defense issues. Sen.

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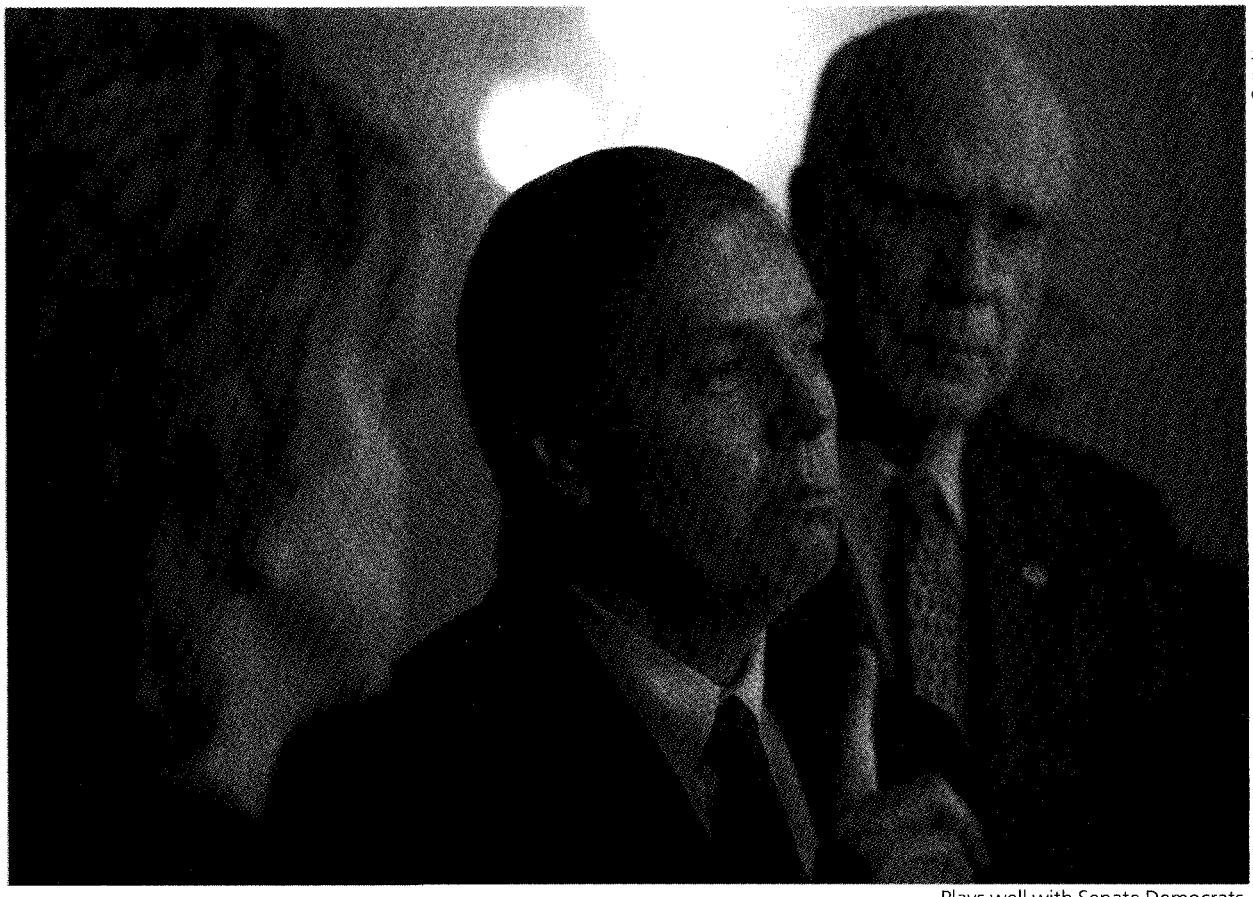

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Plays well with Senate Democrats

John Sununu (R-N.H.) and Sen. Judd Gregg (R-N.H.) have allied with Democrats to hold up the White House's energy bill due to environmental concerns. And old lions Sen. John Warner (R-Va.) and Sen. Pete Domenici (R-N.M.) have stalled in the path of a dramatic and controversial change in parliamentary procedure that would smooth confirmation for the most conservative of Bush's judicial nominations. The Senate's latest arrivals are catching on. Conservative freshmen Sens. David Vitter (R-La.) and John Thune (R-S.D.) are pushing their own version of a bill to allow the reimportation of prescription drugs from Canada.

Of all the swing conservatives, Graham is arguably the one willing to cross deepest into bipartisan territory. But while his apostasies make headlines and give the White House occasional headaches, when all is said and done, Graham's independence is at least as valuable to the Republicans as it is to Democrats. Consider his role in the Abu Ghraib hearings. With his tough questioning of Rumsfeld, Graham earned a rare Washington commodity: credibility. In the end, however, he put that credibility to use in bolstering the position of the secretary of defense. On "Meet the Press," Graham pointedly refused to say Rumsfeld should step down, a position he has maintained ever since. During those crucial early days, Rumsfeld's ability to maintain unified GOP support in the Senate was essential to his political survival. Had Graham flipped, the White House's continued loyalty to Rumsfeld would have been made far more difficult, if not impossible. Graham's even-handed posture "did a lot to end a period that was corrosive and dangerous for the administration," says Sen. Joe Biden (D-Del.).

For all the appeal of Graham's swing conservatism to Democrats, the elemental fact is that, on the big questions, it serves Republicans most.

The path to power

The Senate offers countless opportunities to study the taxonomy of power. There are, for instance, the traditional metrics of seniority and committee assignments. But these are static and can't account for sudden shifts of influence. For that, better places to look are the hallways on Tuesdays after each party's weekly caucus meeting. Senators file into the hallways surrounding the Senate chamber and are met by a phalanx of reporters looking for quotes to fill their stories. Nabbing a senator here is like catching a trout in a stocked pond. Even the backbenchers are stopped by at least a wire-service reporter looking to provide quotes for the senators' local papers. But the stars—the McCains and Clintons—are mobbed, holding forth for five, 10, 15 reporters at once. Time is short, and reporters jockey for position to make sure their questions can be asked and answered. You can tell how hot a senator is by the size of the impromptu press conference gathering around him. At such moments, Graham looks slightly out of place.

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Many senators seem to stand on tiptoe in a crowd. Graham, only 5'7", feels free to slouch.

When I first began researching this story in early February, three or four reporters would gather around Graham after the caucus meetings, politely allowing their colleagues the chance to ask questions and follow-up, certain that they'd get their chance. But when the Social-Security debate started heating up, Graham became a commodity, and the circle of reporters surrounding him to fish for some juicy quote skeptical of the president's plan began to grow. By March, when Graham stepped off of the Capitol's "Senators Only" elevator on his way to a GOP lunch, he found himself immediately surrounded by at least a dozen reporters, who queried him at length about his Social-Security plan.

When Graham was finished, I asked him to step aside to talk about the evolution of his independent status. Graham brought me into the ornate President's Room, which is a prime spot for lobbyists to congregate because it is near the Republican cloakroom. Immediately, an environmental lobbyist standing behind a velvet rope buttonholed Graham to ask him to oppose drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Graham smiled and politely told her that he was on the other side, then added ingenuously, "But thanks for asking."

It is no surprise that Graham would be asked, even though he has been a safe vote against the environmental lobby throughout his career. His willingness to work with the Democrats and against the administration on hot-button issues leads many Democrats to convince themselves that Graham, in his heart, is really with them. In addition to bucking the White House on Social Security, Graham had recently held a press conference with Sen. Clinton to push a bill extending health care to National Guard members and their families. "There are people at home [who] hate the fact that I'm going on TV with Senator Clinton," Graham told me. "[But] if at the end of the day, Lindsey Graham and Hillary Clinton can impact the lives of National Guard families, I would be very pleased. To the critics: Don't get so hard in your political life that you can't help people that have problems."

Graham grew up in Seneca, S.C., where his mother and father ran a small neighborhood bar next to a textile plant. The Grahams lived in two rooms behind the bar. In a two-year span while Graham was studying at the University of South Carolina, both of his parents died of illnesses. His sister was only 13 at the time, and Graham at first volunteered to raise her, though he was only a senior; his extended family decided it would be best if she lived with a nearby aunt and uncle. After Graham graduated from college and law school, he entered the Air Force and formally adopted his sister, largely so that she could share in his military health benefits. After spending four years abroad as a senior Air Force prosecutor, Graham returned to South Carolina and joined a friend's law practice. As a trial lawyer, Graham represented criminal defendants and medical malpractice plaintiffs, and earned both a substantial local repu-

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Many senators seem to stand on tiptoe in a crowd. Graham, only 5'7", feels free to slouch.

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Some people might say that Lindsey Graham, because of his opposition to the Paula Jones article of impeachment, saved Bill Clinton a good deal of trouble.

tation and the money he would later use to finance his early political career. The same year that he won a $5 million malpractice case award, Graham put up $20,000 of his own money to finance a winning 1992 campaign for the State House. Two years later, he financed a campaign for Congress and, like 32 other Republican signatories of the Contract With America, swept into Washington on the coattails of Newt Gingrich.

Graham positioned himself squarely inside the Republican Revolution, but he never seemed to get lost amid the heady anti-government mantras of his colleagues. With a position on the House Subcommitte on Workforce Protections, Graham took part in the conservative effort to weaken the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). But while his colleagues were demonizing OSHA as "the Gestapo of the federal government," Graham was far more equitable. Discussing the need for reform in a *Washington Post* article, Graham said he remembered watching textile workers come into his parents' bar "with their shirts covered with cotton, white as they could be. There'd be a finger missing on every other person." Graham admitted that the government needed to play a role to make workplaces safer, just as it had been needed to end segregation. He wasn't opposed to a government role per se, but OSHA had gone too far in his view, and it was necessary for a Republican Congress to "correct the excesses of government from the past generation."

By 1997, Graham became disillusioned with Gingrich after the Speaker had been forced into a variety of compromises with the White House. That summer, Graham became one of the leaders of a group of 11 conservative House members who began discussing ways to replace Gingrich. At the same time, Gingrich deputies Dick Armey, Tom DeLay, and Bill Paxon were talking privately of a revolt of their own. The two groups quickly found each other and Graham hosted a midnight meeting in his office where DeLay told the group that other members of the House leadership would support a move to replace Gingrich. But the putsch didn't get off the ground. Gingrich got wind of the revolt and quickly consolidated power.

Found out, Armey and DeLay abandoned their hopes of unseating Gingrich and distanced themselves from the plotters, even dressing down Graham and the other rebels in a private meeting with the Speaker. Word spread through the caucus and during one meeting, Armey was asked by a Gingrich loyalist about rumors that "leadership," meaning Armey himself, had been involved in the coup. Armey called the rumor "trash," pinning the revolt on Graham and his cohorts. Graham became so incensed at Armey's claim that he leapt from his seat and knocked over several chairs in an aggressive lunge for a microphone, before being held back by colleagues, according to an account in *The Washington Post*.

At a subsequent meeting, one congressman demanded that the dissidents account for their disloyalty to the leader who brought the Republicans to power. All were quiet except for Graham, who stood and explained that while he understood the importance of loyalty from his days in the Air Force, he had to be pragmatic. Gingrich, whose personal approval ratings nationally were at the time in the 20s, was less popular in his conservative South Carolina district than President Clinton, Graham said. "If I do well in my district, it is in spite of Newt Gingrich," he told the caucus. Former Rep. Bill Paxon, now a lobbyist, who lost his leadership post because of his role in the coup, told me recently that he thought Graham had been forthright about his role from beginning to end. "He didn't hide it. He didn't try to manipulate things. He was very straightforward about it." Graham now says the experience was liberating, allowing him to diverge from leadership's line, but at the same time it taught him an important lesson about how to do it with more grace and effectiveness. "It made me more willing to speak my mind, but more understanding of: You don't have to go into a room and blow it up. You should try to be more clever and thoughtful about how you do it."

While his involvement certainly didn't make Graham any friends in the House leadership, circumstances pushed him back into the spotlight the following year when his position on the House Judiciary Committee led to a role as one of 13 House managers during the Senate impeachment trial of President Clinton. Graham stood out among the crowd, earning a reputation for bipartisanship and was among a group of several members who explored whether it would be possible to avoid a trial by reaching a settlement. Again, Graham displayed no sign of personal malice, but his skill and experience as a trial attorney gave the White House legal team problems. Greg Craig, one of Clinton's attorneys during impeachment, recalls a "brutal" legal attack that Graham launched against Charles Ruff, another Clinton attorney—which had been completely unexpected.

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Graham focused on whether Clinton had committed an abuse of power by using White House employees like Sidney Blumenthal to smear Monica Lewinsky.

But when the votes were taken in committee on four separate articles of impeachment, Graham voted against one count dealing with whether Clinton had perjured himself in his deposition in the Paula Jones civil lawsuit, making him the only Judiciary Committee Republican to oppose an impeachment article. Graham's reasoning was that all kinds of people might be tempted to lie about their sex lives in a civil case. "He was looking at the constitutional standard and taking it seriously," said Craig. Graham's opposition, Craig believes, is the reason the article later failed on the House floor. "That was Lindsey Graham," he told me. "I'm sure it's [because of] Lindsey Graham." Ironically, Craig said, that article would have been among the most difficult for Clinton's team to defend against because of some of Clinton's statements during the civil deposition. "Some people might say that Lindsey Graham, because of his opposition to the Paula Jones article, was responsible for saving the president a good deal of trouble."

With the attention he received from the impeachment trial, Graham quickly became the most prominent Republican congressman from South Carolina, and he positioned himself for a run for the Senate as Thurmond neared the end of this term. Announcing his candidacy in February 2001, Graham promised, "For the rest of my life, I will honor Senator Thurmond's legacy and continue to fight for his cause of conservative government." Graham won Thurmond's endorsement and quickly muscled out other challengers by building an early war chest. In an effort to punish him for chairing McCain's 2000 South Carolina primary campaign, the White House tried to recruit a challenger but failed. Eventually, the administration threw its weight behind Graham's campaign. Early in 2002, Vice President Dick Cheney visited South Carolina and offered the White House's unflinching support to Graham. With Bush enormously popular in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, Graham made his close ties to the White House a central issue in his campaign. During Cheney's visit, Graham said, "God has put the right two people in charge of America at the right time." In a state Bush had won two years earlier by 16 percent, Graham won over Democrat Alex Sanders easily.

Good cop, bad cop

Graham entered the Senate at a uniquely polarized moment, and his first year was dominated by bitter floor fights over judicial nominations, tax cuts, and Iraq. The freshman senator was a reliable vote for Republicans on all three issues. But Graham set himself apart from a broad GOP effort to isolate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle as an obstructionist unable to work with Republicans. Graham, unbothered by the GOP's strategy, asked Daschle if he could sign on to a bill the Democratic leader had written that would extend health coverage of military reservists. At a time when Daschle was working to reestablish his bipartisan credentials for the conservative South Dakota electorate he would face in November 2004, the cooperation of a Republican senator was valuable, and the Daschle campaign duly touted the partnership. Just a week after Senate Republican Leader Bill Frist broke with Senate tradition to campaign against his counterpart in South Dakota, Graham was on the floor of the Senate thanking Daschle for his graciousness and leadership on an important military issue. While Graham never went far out of his way to emphasize his connection to Daschle, he seemed to relish crossing the battle lines. As he left one meeting with senior members of Daschle's staff, Graham joked, "Republican by day. Democrat by night," according to a Democratic aide. Daschle and Graham's bill did not pass, and with Daschle no longer in the Senate, Graham has found one of the few partners less popular with Republicans than Daschle: Hillary Clinton.

While Graham actively campaigned for President Bush's reelection, his role in the Abu Ghraib hearings cemented his reputation among the national media as an independent voice and honest broker. That, alongside his ambition to be a national figure and willingness to sweat the details, has put Graham at the fulcrum of Social Security, the most contentious and far-reaching domestic policy debate in at least a decade.

Graham brings a special interest to Social Security. He and his sister received survivor benefits after his parents' death. "As a 22-year-old college student with a 13-year-old sister to raise," he says today, "survivor benefits meant the world to me and our family." Still, Graham campaigned in 2002 on a pledge to overhaul Social Security and has long been a champion of private accounts. But once again, Graham has set himself against the single-mindedness of the administration. While President Bush has declined to say how he would pay for the shortfall created by a switch to private accounts, saying that this is the job of Congress, Graham has been unabashedly taking his colleagues to task for acting as though they can have it all. "The one thing we're not doing as Republicans is asking anybody to pay for anything," Graham told a small group of reporters recently. "You can't borrow everything to fix these big entitlement programs. Where you can raise revenue, you should." And Graham hasn't been shy about proposing ways to raise the funds. Early in the year, Graham floated the idea of raising the cap on the payroll tax from $90,000 to $200,000. At the same time, he has suggested lowering the 12.4 percent rate to 11.9 percent, which, alongside the higher cap, would have the effect of making the payroll tax significantly more progressive. Make no mistake, Graham's proposal amounts to a tax increase, something that has certainly gotten the attention of the conservative establishment. "If this talk con-

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Whether Democrats succeed in taking back power may depend on their ability to resist the temptations of working with Sen. Graham, whose good intentions, at least, they have every reason to trust.

tinues," said conservative economist Lawrence Kudlow, "the president's political base could suffer a sizable morale loss." The *National Review* ran a story on Graham's idea titled "Graham Crackers."

Graham is also reaching out to Democrats to try and salvage a deal. Graham has been meeting with a core group of Senate centrists on Social Security. Among them are Sen. Lieberman, Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.) who backed the president on a recent class action bill, and Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.), the top Democrat on the Finance Committee, who backed Bush's 2001 tax cuts. Late last year, Graham penned an op-ed with Sen. Kent Conrad (D-N.D.), the top Democrat on the Budget Committee, stating that "all options" should be on the table.

In short, Graham has displayed the characteristics that have made him a favorite among Washington Democrats. He's been forthright in acknowledging that private accounts alone won't fix the financial shortfall. He's proven willing to buck his party's leadership to propose tax increases. And he's demonstrated a political appreciation for the Democrats' determination to preserve guaranteed benefits for the poor. "I'm trying to take all of these things expressed to me by Democrats into consideration," he said. If Graham can get Democratic centrists and GOP budget hawks to reach agreement, he can force changes in the Bush plan, including requiring the president to make tough choices to pay for it in order to get it through the Senate.

And for Democrats, that could be the problem. Just as Graham's tough and evenhanded posture ended up preserving Donald Rumsfeld's job, his maneuvering on Social Security could, in the end, give cover to the president's plan to privatize Social Security. Graham seems genuine about his proposal and his claims of seeking bipartisan compromise. But unwittingly or not, Graham seems to be playing the good cop in the Republican Good Cop/Bad Cop game. His sweet demeanor seems to assure Democrats that he's not on some ideological crusade. He demonstrates a concern for their ideas and is even willing to make their case to the GOP higher-ups. It's convincing because it's sincere. Graham is a good cop because in his heart, he believes cops should be good. But at the end of the day, he may use the credibility he has built through negotiations to ask Democrats to sign on to a compromise that creates private accounts for Social Security recipients. If even one or two bite, those Democrats will be handing President Bush the single most significant domestic achievement of his presidency and fundamentally and forever altering the flagship liberal government program. If and when that happens, the White House may have Lindsey Graham to thank for it.

This is why some of the most politically astute Democrats view Graham with circumspection. "I think he's on the level," says John Podesta, Clinton's former chief of staff. But that doesn't mean he's an ally. "The standard play for these guys is [that] the House passes some really right wing thing. They find some sort of compromise that a few Democrats are for, and then they pass the House version of the bill. We've seen this play out a number of times across a range of issues. It's proven to be both substantively and politically an unattractive option."

This isn't to say Democrats are fools to work with Graham or the other swing conservatives. Sen. Clinton is hoping that her association with Graham, who after all was among the House members arguing for her husband's impeachment, sands down the partisan edges from her image. ("I think he was against us," Podesta deadpanned, when asked about Graham's role during impeachment. "It hasn't stopped Senator Clinton from working with him.") Moreover, in a GOP-dominated Senate, Democrats need Republicans to help get a hearing for their policy ideas. Graham and the others offer a conservative stamp of approval on legislation that at the end of the day requires the assent of leadership if it is ever to see action. If Democrats accomplish anything in the 109th Congress, it will be thanks to swing conservatives such as Lindsey Graham.

But if they ever hope to take power back from the Republicans, Democrats will need to learn precisely when to reject Graham's entreaties for compromise. More and more, both parties are relying on stark contrasts to define themselves and their policies to voters. Graham, by his nature and through his policies, tends to blur distinctions between opposing camps. Whether or not Social-Security reform succeeds this year—and whether Democrats succeed in ever taking back power—may depend on Democrats' ability to resist the temptations of working with a Republican whose good intentions, at least, they have every reason to trust. ◆

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Taking Liberty

Liberals ignore and conservatives misunderstand America's guiding value: freedom.

By William A. Galston

George W. Bush's second inaugural address, with its sweeping rhetoric about the spread of freedom abroad and at home, sparked strong but varied reactions. Most of the president's conservative supporters ranked it with the greatest inaugural speeches, such as John F. Kennedy's 1961 call to bear any burden and pay any price in the service of human freedom and Lincoln's sermonic 1865 meditation on the inscrutable justice of God's judgment on those who deny freedom to others. The president's liberal critics were less laudatory, agreeing instead with former Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan's surprising judgment that the speech fell "somewhere between dreamy and disturbing." Whether the speech was a display of visionary statesmanship, or an exercise in hubristic overreach, is something only history can determine. But it is not too early to say that the speech was both a wakeup call to liberals—from whose vocabulary the evocative term "freedom" has been mostly absent in recent years—and a guide to the deep flaws in the modern conservative understanding of freedom.

In declaring, "It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture," President Bush picked up a rhetorical battle standard of freedom first carried by Woodrow Wilson and later lofted by Cold War liberals and Ronald Reagan. But he went his predecessors one better. In a grand rhetorical stroke, Bush sought to terminate the venerable debate between foreign policy "idealists" and "realists": Not only does the promotion of democracy reflect our values, it also advances our interests. It is the resentment stimulated by tyranny, he argued, that produces terrorism, and the only cure for tyranny is freedom. Thus, "The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands."

President Bush's language effectively taps a deep vein of the American psyche. It is the way we like to think of ourselves. Even more, it is the way we wish to understand the world—as an orderly cosmos where our ideals and our interests coincide. If only it were so. International conditions have almost always forced presidents, to one extent or another, to choose between protecting the nation's interests and advancing the borders of freedom—and an unswerving devotion to the latter has often led to disaster. Recall how Wilson's conception of national self-determination helped sow the seeds of an unstable, punitive peace and the most destructive war the world has ever known. Recall also the unsavory alliances Cold War presidents of both parties were forced to make. The hard truth is that it's not always possible to promote the ends of freedom with the means of freedom. To prosecute the global war on terror and to minimize the chances of an even more devastating strike on our homeland, we will often be forced to compromise with the Putins and Musharrafs of this world. We should not assume that democracy will always drain the swamps where terrorism breeds. Sometimes autocratic governments will do more to suppress terror-

William A. Galston, Interim Dean of the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy, was Deputy Assistant to President Bill Clinton for Domestic Policy, 1993-1995. His most recent book is *The Practice of Liberal Pluralism* (Cambridge, 2004).

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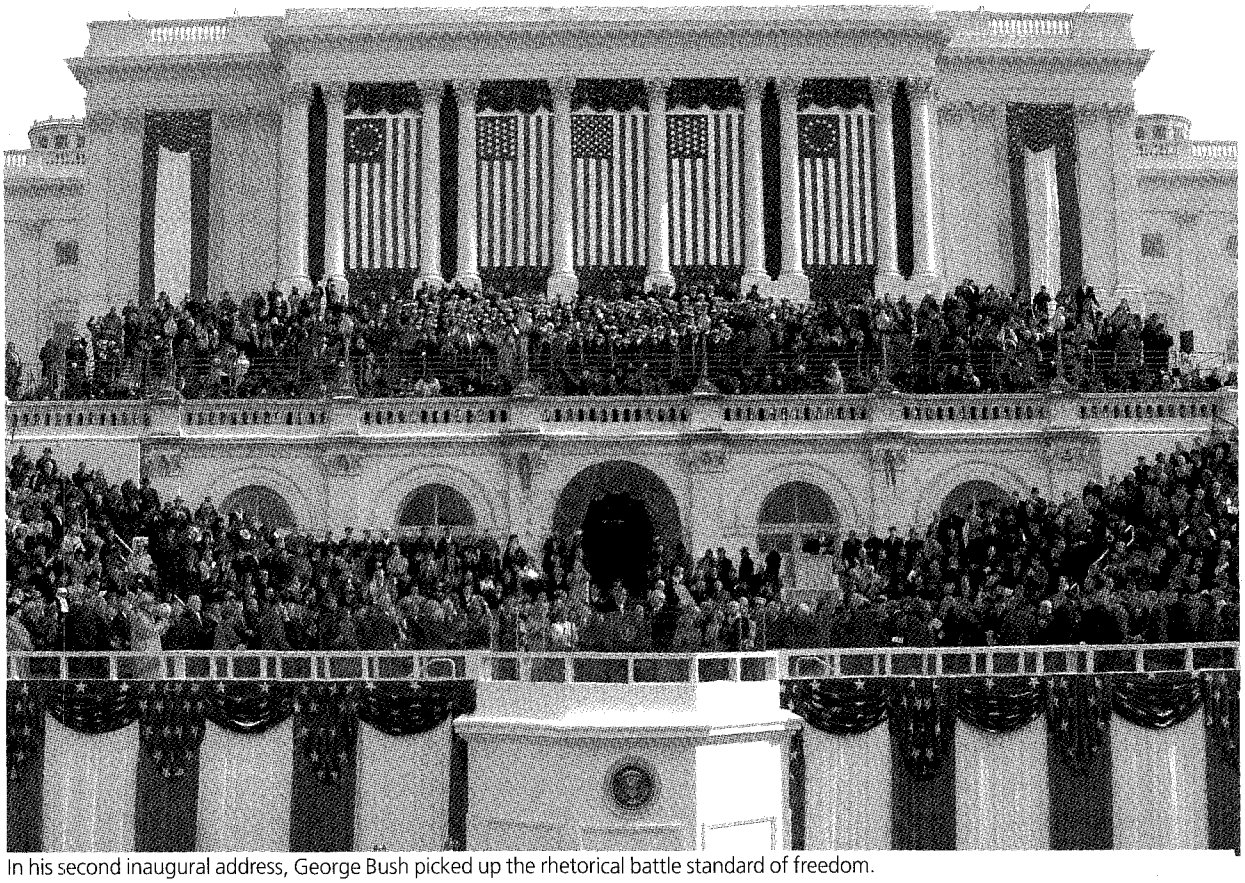

In his second inaugural address, George Bush picked up the rhetorical battle standard of freedom.

ism than to stimulate it; sometimes elections will empower radically anti-American leaders and create more space in which terrorists can operate. And it is tunnel-visioned to believe, as the president does, that a democratic offense is always the best defense. Whatever one thinks of the war in Iraq, it is sobering to reflect on its opportunity costs—on the quantity of loose nuclear materials we could have secured around the world and the number of facilities we could have hardened at home with the hundreds of billions of dollars we are spilling in the sands of Mesopotamia.

Nonetheless, it was impossible not to be moved by the sight of 8.5 million Iraqis braving threats and violence to vote, or to be heartened by the signs of democratic self-determination in Lebanon and elsewhere in the Middle East. President Bush's faith in the transformative power of freedom may be extreme and un-nuanced, but it is not wholly misplaced.

Much the same may be said of freedom in the domestic sphere. The president's speech invoked the "broader definition of liberty" he saw at work in historic programs such as the Homestead Act, Social Security, and the GI Bill of Rights. Appealing to classic civic republicanism, he rooted citizenship in the "independence" that stems from "ownership." And he boldly appropriated Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" for his own purposes: "By making every citizen an agent of his or her own destiny," he declared, "we will give our fellow Americans greater freedom from want and fear." Whatever may have been the case 70 years ago, he asserted, conservative individualist means are now better suited to serve classic liberal ends than are New Deal programs of social solidarity.

Here, as in the international arena, a vast gap exists between President Bush's abstract rhetoric of freedom and real world conditions. In the case of Social Security, for example, the problems are far less severe than the president has suggested. And his proposed cure—private accounts—does nothing to address the solvency of the system, even as it risks plunging millions of retirees into poverty while adding trillions of dollars in transition costs to the government's already mountainous debt. The more voters learn about the president's plan, the less they like it. Still, its core idea—freedom understood as increased individual choice and control over one's own destiny—has an undeniable appeal.

After all, the idea of freedom is at the heart of our nation's creed. Edmund Burke famously observed that Americans "sniff the approach of tyranny in every tainted breeze." Even today, the extraordinary value Americans place on individual liberty is what most distinguishes our culture, and the political party seen by voters as the most willing to defend and expand liberty is the one that usually wins elections. Conservatives have learned this lesson; too many liberals have forgotten it. And as long as liberals fool themselves into believing that appeals to income distribution tables can take the place of policies that promote freedom, they will lose.

The questions before us are, what is the meaning of freedom in the 21st century, and what are the means needed to make it effective in our lives? Those of us who oppose the conservative answer cannot succeed by changing the question. We can only succeed by giving a better answer.

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Free love and free markets

For much of the 20th century, progressives took the lead in both defining freedom and advancing its borders. Teddy Roosevelt expanded the 19th century *laissez-faire* conception of freedom, in which government was seen as the greatest threat, to include the liberties of workers and entrepreneurs to get ahead in the world, freedoms restricted by concentrations of economic power and protected by the exercise of public power. Woodrow Wilson boldly reversed the inherited belief that America's national freedom was best secured by abstaining from foreign entanglements, insisting that the liberty of other peoples would strengthen our own. FDR further redefined the concept to include social protection from the ills of want and fear. JFK invoked service to country in freedom's cause. Martin Luther King Jr. appealed to civil and political freedom that included all Americans, rooted in universalistic concepts that included every human being. Women fought for opportunity by bringing private oppression into public view. What united all these new visions of liberty was the idea that freedom is not necessarily diminished by government but can often be advanced only through the vigorous actions of government.

And then, the cause of liberal freedom ran smack into Vietnam and the counterculture. The war in Indochina represented, for too many progressive critics, not just a monumental blunder, but also evidence that the entire enterprise of advancing freedom through an anti-communist foreign policy was suffused with self-delusion and hypocrisy. These critics rejected the belief that, on balance, American influence was a force for good in the world. On the domestic front, what began honorably in the early 1960s as the effort to expand freedom of speech and self-fulfillment was transformed just a decade later into an antinomian conception of freedom as liberation from all restraint. Enthusiasts could no longer distinguish between liberty and license, and so lost touch with the moral concerns of average citizens, especially parents struggling to raise their children in what they saw as a culture increasing inhospitable to decency and self-restraint.

As the public reaction to these events shifted the balance of political power toward conservatism, some liberals reacted by relying excessively on the courts as counterweights against democratic majorities. Others, disappointed by what they viewed as the failure of civil rights laws to bolster the economic status of African Americans, tried to redefine the progressive enterprise around values such as fairness and equality of results. Still others, the spiritual heirs of the Port Huron Statement and the New Left, opposed what they saw as the inherently competitive and anti-social individualism of American-style freedom.

As progressives abandoned the discourse of freedom, conservatives were more than ready to claim it. They had spent decades preparing for this opening. Friedrich Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*, published in 1944, fired the opening salvo by identifying government intervention in the economy as a threat to individual liberty. A decade later, Hayek pronounced himself puzzled that conservatives had allowed the left to control the definition of liberty, "this almost indispensable term." During the 1950s, says historian Eric Foner, "a group of conservative thinkers began the task of reclaiming the idea of freedom."

At a 1956 conference, Milton Friedman argued that a free market was the necessary foundation for societies in which individual liberty flourishes. What had begun as the precondition of freedom soon became its template: Libertarian conservatives redefined freedom as the right to choose and extended this understanding far beyond the market, to social relations and public policy.

These thinkers encountered a challenge within the emerging conservative movement, from traditionalists who focused on values such as order and virtue and who questioned the social consequences of the unfettered market. This tension was not in all respects an outright contradiction and thus proved to be manageable. In his classic *Capitalism and Freedom*, Friedman acknowledged that every form of social organization—including the market—relies on a framework of generally accepted rules, and that "no set of rules can prevail unless most participants most of the time conform to them without external sanctions." Not only must participants internalize rules, he continued, they must also develop certain traits of character. These requirements are especially demanding in systems of liberty: Freedom can be preserved, he concluded, "only for people who are willing to practice self-denial, for otherwise freedom degenerates into license and irresponsibility."

This line of argument raised a key question: If virtue was needed for a free society, and if we are not born virtuous, how are we to acquire it? Here entered the second premise of modern American conservatism, the proposition that civil society will generate a virtuous citizenry if only government leaves it alone to do its vital work. Not government, but rather families, neighborhoods, and faith communities sustain the moral foundations of freedom. This conservative synthesis of markets and civil society, which suffused Ronald Reagan's first successful presidential campaign, achieved lapidary statement in George W. Bush's second inaugural. "In America's ideal of freedom," he declared, "the public interest depends on private character—on integrity and tolerance toward others and the rule of conscience in our own lives. Self-government relies, in the end, on the governing of the self. That edifice of character is built in families, supported by communities with standards, and sustained in our national life by the truths of Sinai, the Sermon on the Mount, the words of the Koran and the varied faiths of our people."

President Bush's reference to the Sermon on the Mount reminds us that synthesizing the market and civil society does not fully resolve the tension between libertarians and traditionalists. After all, it was on that occasion that Jesus advised his listeners not to heap up earthly treasure because no one can pursue more than one master: "You cannot serve God and mammon." At this point, the third premise of contemporary conservatism comes to the rescue. This is the thesis, developed by American Enterprise Institute scholar Michael Novak, among others, that capitalist markets, far from under-

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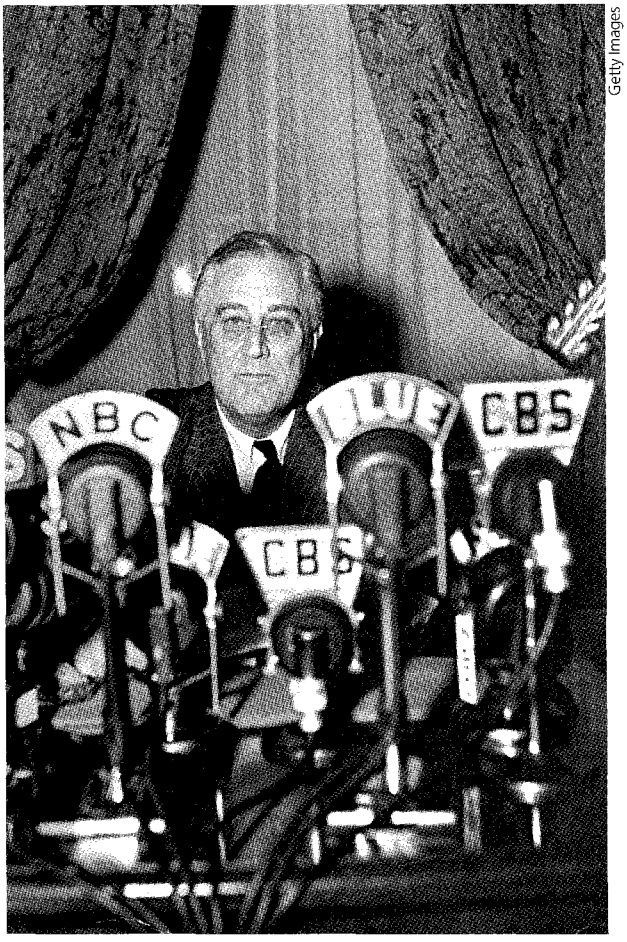
mining individual virtues and social bonds, actually fortify them. Capitalism, Novak insists, both depends upon and builds virtues such as initiative, enterprise, and social cooperation. A government that minimizes the appropriation of wealth for public purposes maximizes the scope for acts of Christian charity. And more than that: Life in capitalist societies promotes the highest form of freedom—namely, the creativity of the human person. There are also echoes of this argument in President Bush's second inaugural, especially when he claimed that moving from social provision to individual ownership strengthens individuals' moral capacities to meet the "challenges of life in a free society."

This is, let us admit, a powerful and evocative conception of freedom, blending a constellation of ideas with deep resonance in American culture. It serves, moreover, as the basis of a powerful coalition between economic interests seeking less regulation and lower taxes and moral traditionalists disturbed by the cultural changes of the past 40 years. Whether we think of ourselves as progressives, liberals, or New Democrats, we cannot evade the challenge posed by these ideas and by the political currents they have set in motion. If we do not meet them head-on, we will prevail only infrequently and accidentally. And when we lose, which will be most of time, we will deserve it.

Let "freedom" ring

There will be a temptation by many, especially on the left, to think that this fight can be won merely by "reframing" the debate—that is, using the word "freedom" to shift the discussion to other philosophical terrain, like economic fairness and social justice, on which today's left is more comfortable. That temptation should be avoided. Because freedom has its own context and logic, we cannot make it mean whatever we like. As the great British philosopher of freedom Isaiah Berlin reminds us, "Everything is what it is: liberty is liberty, not equality or fairness or justice." When conservatives promote their tax and fiscal policies as advancing economic freedom, liberals cannot expect to get very far by complaining endlessly that such policies are "unfair." They certainly are, and more scrupulous leaders would be ashamed to propose them. But if we have learned anything since the collapse of the liberal hegemony in the 1960s, it is that the appeal to freedom trumps the appeal to fairness.

Instead of dodging the issue, an effective center-left strategy should begin with a critique of the fundamental conservative conception of freedom because that conception is fatally flawed. Experience gives us no reason to conclude that government is the only, or always the gravest, threat to freedom; clerical institutions and concentrations of unchecked economic power have often vied for that dubious honor. Nor has the ideological synthesis of markets and civil society abolished the very real problem at issue between libertarians and traditionalists: The unchecked market regularly produces social outcomes at odds with the moral conditions of a free society. Thus, it is that a conservative FCC chairman pledged to media deregulation ends up imposing new restraints in



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FDR's fireside chats invoked the notion of "four freedoms," a theme depicted in Norman Rockwell illustrations and wartime posters.

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the name of decency. Nor is it easy to believe that capitalism reliably produces, or rewards, the good character a free society needs: Perceptive observers from Charles Dickens to Tom Wolfe have given us ample evidence to the contrary. And while it may be that long-term dependence on government saps the spirit of self-reliance that liberty requires, there are other forms of dependence—economic, social, and even familial—that can, and often do, damage character in much the same way.

At the heart of the conservative misunderstanding of liberty is the presumption that government and individual freedom are fundamentally at odds. At the heart of any liberal counteroffensive must be a subtler but more truthful proposition: Public power can advance freedom as well as thwart it.

In the real world, which so many conservatives steadfastly refuse to face, there is no such thing as freedom in the abstract. There are only specific freedoms, which differ in their conditions and consequences. FDR famously enumerated four such freedoms, dividing them into two pairs: freedom *of* speech and worship; freedom *from* want and fear. The first pair had long been recognized and enshrined in the Constitution. The second were a new formulation, and Roosevelt made them concrete when he signed Social Security into law, justifying it as a way of promoting freedom from want: "We have tried to frame a law which will give some measure of protection to the average citizen and to his family... against poverty-ridden old age." Three years later, he declared that Social Security payments will "furnish that minimum necessity to keep a foothold; and that is the kind of protection Americans want."

The conservatives of Roosevelt's era disparaged the second pair as "New Deal freedoms" rather than "American freedoms," as do many conservatives today. But those who have experienced the freedoms made possible by the New Deal are not so dismissive. It is often observed, rightly, that Social Security has virtually eliminated poverty among the elderly. But this noble achievement has an equally profound flip side. Throughout human history, those who reached the age where they could no longer work have typically depended on their children or on charity for their basic subsistence. Social Security broke this age-old dependency by giving the elderly a minimum degree of economic self-sufficiency. It is almost impossible to exaggerate how much this independence means to seniors. It is why Social Security has become the third rail of American politics. Seniors react with ferocity to efforts to "reform" the program not merely because they are defending a source of income, but because they are defending their freedom.

Liberals seldom talk about Social Security or other programs in terms of freedom. But they should. George W. Bush certainly does. In his second inaugural address, Bush accepted the validity of Roosevelt's concept of Four Freedoms. But he went on to contend that in today's circumstances, his brand of conservatism—his so-called "ownership society"—offers more effective means to traditional New Deal ends: "By making every citizen an agent of his or her own destiny, we will give our fellow Americans *greater* freedom from want and fear." In essence, the president was saying that his solution to Social Security's fiscal problems would provide seniors with the freedom from want and fear they had come to expect, but with two additional liberties: freedom of choice, and freedom from government dependence.

On the face of it, this is a very appealing promise. But as a matter of actual policy, it is a deeply dishonest one. Allowing individuals to invest a portion of their payroll taxes in the stock market necessarily exposes those individuals to greater financial risk, and therefore puts their freedom from want at risk. Yet any attempt to minimize those risks—by having the government pick which funds individuals can invest in, or requiring the annuitization of those investments upon retirement, as the president has suggested—necessarily erodes the freedom of choice and freedom from government control that are the selling points of private accounts. Indeed, the more conservatives add such risk-minimizing features to their proposals to mollify the public's legitimate fears that they may be left penniless in their old age, the more those proposals will come to resemble the traditional Social Security program that conservatives are trying to escape.

The president's promises are unsound not just on the level of policy, but on that of principle. "Freedom of" and "freedom from" have distinctly different structures and implications. "Freedom of" points toward spheres of action in which individuals make choices—for example, which faith to embrace, or whether to embrace any faith at all. The task of government is to secure those spheres against interference by individuals, groups, or government itself. By contrast, "freedom from" points toward circumstances that (it is presumed) all wish to avoid. In such instances, the task of government is, so far as possible, to immunize individuals against undesired circumstances. Here government acts to protect not individual agency and choice, but rather individuals' life-circumstances against outcomes that no one would choose, or willingly endure. We do not suppose, for instance, that slavery is a matter of individual choice; rather, after much struggle, we have come to a collective decision that no one in his right mind would prefer slavery to freedom, and we have ordered our laws and institutions accordingly. Similarly, during the New Deal, we made a collective decision that no senior would willingly live in penury and shouldn't have to.

It follows that libertarian freedom, the "right to choose," is but a part of freedom in the fuller sense. As a motorist, I am rightly free to choose my own route and destination. But government correctly infers that I also wish to be protected from smashing into other cars, and so restricts which side of the road others and I may drive on. My desire to avoid an accident is no less real than my desire to drive where I please. Similarly, the desire to avoid want and fear is no less real than the desire to speak and worship without interference. The point is that any society that takes freedom from want and fear seriously has made a collective decision: Certain condi-

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At the heart of the conservative misunderstanding of liberty is the presumption that government and individual freedom are fundamentally at odds. At the heart of any liberal counteroffensive must be a subtler but more truthful proposition: Public power can advance freedom as well as thwart it.

tions are objectively bad; its citizens should not have to endure them if the means of their abatement are in hand; and individual choice is not a necessary component of and may be a hindrance to attaining these freedoms.

In addition to presuming that freedom must always involve individual choice, conservatives tend to mischaracterize and misunderstand many aspects of freedom, in particular, its costs. Freedom from want and fear often requires citizens to contribute some of their individual resources for collective purposes and makes better-off citizens contribute more. Conservatives have a tendency to focus on these costs without factoring in the benefits, and thus they often do not see or acknowledge that the net result is an increase in freedom. It has often been observed, for instance, that freedom for the pike is death for the minnow. Curtailing the freedom of the pike is often the only way of securing the freedom of the minnow. And there are usually far more minnows than pikes. So when government leans against the depredations of the powerful, it is enhancing freedom, not curtailing it. When government acts to ward off, or break up, excessive concentrations of private power, it does not diminish, but rather enhances, liberty rightly understood.

Specific freedoms often have conditions for their effective exercise, and government must sometimes act to ensure broad access to those conditions. A familiar but not trivial example: Nothing safeguards liberty more than the rule of law; fair trials are essential to the rule of law; and the Sixth Amendment's guarantee of the "assistance of counsel" for every accused is essential to fair trials. Many Americans cannot afford to pay for defense lawyers, and the legal profession does not contribute enough *pro bono* hours to fill the gap. The government therefore taxes better-off Americans to provide legal counsel for the disadvantaged. In the process, it unavoidably restricts individuals' freedom to use those tax dollars for other purposes. But does anyone seriously doubt that this use of government's taxing power enhances the sum of freedom in our country?

Another example: Under modern conditions, the freedom of individuals to participate in the labor market requires the mastery of work-related knowledge and skills, many of which can only be acquired through formal education. The government uses its power of taxation to ensure that this education is within the reach of all families regardless of their private resources. While this policy restricts the ability of wealthier families to use those tax dollars for private purposes, the overall result is to advance freedom within the wider society.

A new liberal freedom agenda

Undermining the conservative vision of freedom is the essential first step for a liberal recovery. But no movement ever built a governing majority just by criticizing its adversaries. To regain the initiative, liberals must return to their historic mission of modernizing and promoting freedom. In this effort, they should be guided by three principles.

First, liberals must recognize that many of their traditional policy goals hold the promise of advancing freedom and should begin to talk about them as such. Consider universal health care. The left typically stresses the social justice side of this issue: In the most prosperous country on earth, it is an avoidable wrong that 45 million citizens lack health insurance. While this point is both accurate and morally admirable, invoking it has not moved the nation any closer to the goal. A more effective argument would focus on the ways in which our current system of employer-provided health care limits individual freedom. Countless Americans today are stuck in unrewarding jobs which they would like to leave—to start a new business or go back to college to upgrade their skills—but dare not, because doing so would deprive themselves and their families of health insurance. A system of universal health care would allow all Americans to pursue their dreams and take more risks.

Or consider post-secondary education. During the past three decades, young Americans with no more than a high school education have seen a steadily narrowing range of occupational choices. In that respect, they are less free than were their parents with the same level of schooling. This isn't just an economic growth issue (though it is), or a social justice issue (though it is that, too); it is at its core an issue of individual freedom. While supporting reforms of grant and loan programs to diminish corruption, enhance efficiency, and improve targeting, liberals should insist on unfettered access to post-secondary education and training, regardless of socioeconomic status. This means getting serious about high school dropout rates, which recent studies show are much higher than is generally understood (about 30 percent nationally, and 50 percent in many black, Hispanic, and low income neighborhoods). It means getting serious about the alarming numbers of students who drop out of college by the end of freshmen year because

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their high school diploma didn't prepare them for entry-level college courses. And it means getting serious about the millions of talented poor and minority kids who don't continue their education after high school because no responsible adult ever told them that they could—and should.

If there was ever an area crying out for what FDR called "bold, persistent experimentation," this is it. Just last month, Yale announced a new program: Students from families earning less than $45,000 would be admitted tuition-free. Only a handful of other institutions, public or private, can afford to follow suit. But a new federal-state partnership could offer all colleges and universities substantial support for recruiting, retaining, and graduating students from families below the median income. Or maybe we should move AmeriCorps closer to what its founders intended it to be: A universal opportunity for young people to serve community and country while earning substantial funds for post-secondary education and training. One thing is clear: We can't sit idly by while the educational barrier to individual freedom rises higher and higher for so many Americans.

The second principle that liberals should remember as they try to reclaim the mantle of freedom is that individual choice, while not always synonymous with liberty, and sometimes contrary to it, is also highly appealing to most Americans. Liberals should therefore look for opportunities to embrace individual choice in ways that embody their principles and promote their objectives. A good example—one several Democrats have already gotten behind—is individual retirement savings accounts added on to, rather than carved out of, Social Security. Another promising, if treacherous, area in which more choice could be promoted is public education. Liberals recoil at school voucher proposals, in part because conservatives openly favor them as a back-door method of undermining public schools and teachers' unions, but also because of a not-unreasonable belief that such measures really aren't the answer to improving failing urban schools. But there is plenty of room short of vouchers for more personal choice in K-through-12 education. Minnesota, for instance, has long permitted its families to choose among public schools across district lines; Britain does much the same.

Moreover, there are ways of structuring vouchers that even liberals might find acceptable. In the pages of this magazine ("Pro Choice," September 2003), Siobhan Gorman has proposed that parents of students from failing public schools be given "accountable vouchers" that could be redeemed for education at private as well as public schools. Every participating school, private or public, would have to adhere to the same mandatory testing regime, to comply with strict anti-discrimination laws, and to accept all voucher-bearers (as long as seats are available) rather than picking among them. Government would have the right to remove from the program private schools whose students fail to meet yearly progress standards, just as it can currently shut down failing charter schools. Such highly-regulated vouchers might, in fact, be anathema to many conservative voucher proponents. But by supporting them, at least for manifestly failing systems such as Washington, D.C.'s, liberals could put themselves on the side of disadvantaged parents eager for better educational choices for their children.

The third principle that should guide a center-left freedom agenda is the notion that freedom is seldom without cost. It usually requires sacrifice. Contemporary conservatism, with its free-lunch mentality, has a hard time admitting this. Liberals should embrace it.

In his recent inaugural address, President Bush eloquently invoked the sacrifices made by young Americans fighting for freedom abroad. Unfortunately, he asked nothing of the rest of us. By contrast, in his 1941 State of the Union speech, at the threshold of the greatest struggle for liberty in the history of the world, FDR forthrightly stated that "I have called for personal sacrifice. I am assured of the willingness of almost all Americans to respond to that call. A part of the sacrifice means the payment of more money in taxes.... I shall recommend that a greater portion of this great defense program be paid for from taxation than we are paying today. No person should try, or be allowed, to get rich out of this program; and the principle of tax payments in accordance with ability to pay should be constantly before our eyes."

We have never heard that kind of candor from President Bush and his supporters, only the continuing pretense that freedom comes free. Americans are perfectly capable of grasping and agreeing with the proposition (should a leading political leader actually present it) that raising taxes in wartime is a sound way to protect our freedom, and borrowing the money we need to fight from the Chinese government is a good way to put that freedom at risk.

Not only do our overseas commitments drain our treasury, they also strain our armed forces almost to the breaking point. Is it responsible leadership to pretend that we can defend freedom with the armed forces we developed in the balmy days after the end of the Cold War? The issue is more than the size of those forces; it involves their structure as well. In his speech, President Bush refers to the idealism of our troops, which "all Americans have witnessed... some for the first time." Can freedom be sustained by a handful of troops cheered on by a nation of spectators? In a country worthy of freedom, all citizens would share the risks and burdens of its defense. And that is what a courageous leader of a free people would propose.

Above all, a new agenda of freedom calls for a new patriotism. In recent decades, too many liberals have given up mobilizing effective coalitions of their fellow citizens and have resorted to anti-majoritarian strategies. Too often, liberals whose hopes have been thwarted by the historic individualism of our culture have pined for an alternative culture more akin to French statism or Scandinavian social democracy. Too often, liberals have reacted to exaggerated claims of American exceptionalism by rejecting the idea outright. These responses are patently self-defeating. We must begin from where we are. We must go with—not against—the American grain. As FDR did three quarters of a century ago, we must mobilize and sustain a popular majority with the freedom agenda our times require. We must love not another country's dream, but our own—the American Dream—and we must work to make it real for every American who reaches for i t. ◆

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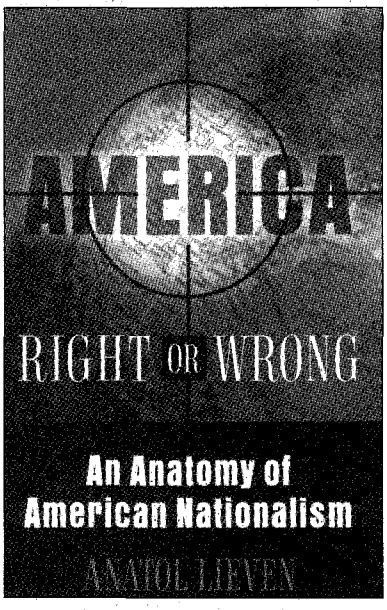
Bloody Necessary

Europeans won't admit it, but America's violent messianism isn't all bad.

By Michael Hirsh

Listening to European intellectuals debate American power these days, I'm often reminded of one of my favorite scenes in *Anna Karenina*. It comes toward the end of the novel, when Tolstoy's other protagonist, the self-doubting Constantine Levin, has his climactic epiphany about faith and God. Levin recalls a moment when his nieces and nephews had been playing games with their milk and raspberries as their mother admonishes them for wastefulness: If they turn their food into a toy, she says, then they will not have anything to eat. Reflecting on her children's bewilderment, Levin realizes that they "could not conceive that what they were destroying was the very thing they lived by." To the children, food had always just been there: "There is no need for us to think about that, it's all ready for us. We want to think out something of our own invention."

When it comes to grappling with the giant across the Atlantic, European thinkers of this generation tend to behave like Tolstoy's children. They toy intellectually with American power, lamenting its excesses, warning of its evils, advising endlessly on its better uses—usually without acknowledging that it is the very thing that has kept them free to have these discussions in the first place, and that today it continues to be the backbone of the international system that sustains them. Tolstoy, of course, was giving us a parable



America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism
By Anatol Lieven
Oxford University Press, $30.00

about how human beings take their faith in God and his works for granted. No one, not even the most fervid neoconservative in George W. Bush's Washington, would mistake America for the Almighty (at least one hopes not). But too often America's works, and their profound influence on the modern world, do go underappreciated (not least by Americans themselves, which is one reason the current international system still seems alien to them rather than what it is: their own creation).

Consider the French, our most persistent critics. Seeking to curb the excesses of the self-righteous, God-obsessed Bush, French officials regularly invoke U.N. resolutions and international law like holy writ. Rarely do they acknowledge that it was another self-righteous, God-obsessed American president, Woodrow Wilson, who forced the proto-United Nations, the League of Nations, on them nearly a century ago; and two other equally self-assured presidents, Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman, who made the next-generation iteration of the failed League work. There are some exceptions in Europe today, like the small band of "anti-anti-Americans" who tentatively defend Bush. But on the whole the Europeans, having known three generations now without war—and earnestly desiring to become "postmodern states" that never again wage war—tend to forget that it is principally the U.S. defense umbrella that has made this dream possible.

Set aside for the moment the precipitous invasion of Iraq. America spends more on defense than the rest of the industrialized world combined not because it is inherently belligerent or militaristic but mainly because America is today more than just the "lone superpower." It is the stabilizer of the international system. American power overlays every region of the planet, and it supplies the control rods that restrain belligerents and arms races from East Asia to Latin America, enabling global-

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ization to proceed apace. With the exception of Iraq, this hidden infrastructure of U.S. power emerges into public view only occasionally, in tsunami relief or in America's unique ability to supply airlift and logistical support to hotspots from East Timor to Sudan. Since 9/11, U.S. special forces have been increasingly operating as global SWAT teams, slipping silently across borders to take out terror cells—systematically, if sometimes savagely, clearing the mean back alleys of the global village (controversial, yes, but most governments don't seem to mind.) Even in Afghanistan, despite considerable European help on the ground, it is "B-52 peacekeeping" in the skies—as a warlord once described it to me—that keeps Hamid Karzai in power, civil war from breaking out, and the Taliban lying low.

Yet, for too many post-Cold War Europeans, this stabilizing structure of American power has been so hidden as not to be worthy of note. Why exactly do they think their governments can afford to spend so little on defense (thereby subsidizing the European welfare state)? As with the children in *Anna Karenina*, "there is no need for us to think about that, it's all ready for us."

Anatol Lieven's new book unfortunately tends to fall into this peevish Euro-genre. I say "unfortunately" because in some respects Lieven's book, *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism*, is the most brilliant analysis of America's attitude toward the world to come along since 9/11. Lieven explains why so many people around the world no longer trust this framework of American power, indeed fear it, especially since the invasion of Iraq. Lieven, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace who has covered hot zones as a correspondent for London's *Times*, is certainly aware of the enormous good that American power has brought to the world. "Following World War II," he writes, "the United States itself played the leading part in creating the institutions which between 2001 and 2003 the Bush administration sought to undermine." The real question now, Lieven notes tartly, is why America is "kicking to pieces the hill of which it is king." His book seeks "to explain why a country which after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, had the chance to create a concert of all the world's major states—including Muslim ones—against Islamist revolutionary terrorism chose instead to pursue policies which divided the West, further alienated the Muslim world and exposed America itself to greatly increased dangers."

Lieven's explanation for this goes to the very root of America's self-identity. But he takes his argument much too far, and this is the book's central weakness. Like many in Europe—and many liberal Democrats here in the United States—Lieven allows his alarm at Bush's foreign policy to lead him to an excessively negative and sweeping critique of American culture and foreign policy. Echoing the essay that inspired it ("The Threat from America," *London Review of Books*, October 2002), the book descends quickly to the level of diatribe and, despite much incisive analysis, never really manages to rise above it. In the end, the author's error is to confuse the pathology of the Bush administration with the alleged pathology of America. To Lieven, the current historical context somehow typifies an American sickness, perpetually latent in our national culture and foreign policy. What is far more likely is that this is an out-of-balance moment illustrating the dominance of a certain strand of political culture—a strand which, when offset by other elements of American culture and foreign-policy tradition (as it usually is), has produced the world that Lieven rightly values.

Lieven is at his best when he traces the lineage of this now-dominant strand of political culture. In three penetrating chapters that should be required reading for anyone seeking to understand Bush's election victory in 2004, he explains how this dominance has come in the form of a successful rebellion against the Eastern elites by the Southern/Frontier culture that has found its hero in Bush. Lieven describes how the "American Creed," the exceptionalist "thesis" that traditionally defines the self-image of most Americans—of a people free, equal, and good—has become overpowered by the "antithesis" of America's "embittered heartland." "While America keeps a splendid and welcoming house, it also keeps a family of demons in the cellar," Lieven writes. "Usually kept under certain restraints, these demons were released by 9/11."

Indeed, they have been. Woodrow Wilson may once have invoked God as stridently as Bush now doess—America's sponsorship of the League, Wilson once intoned, has "come about by no plan of our conceiving, but by the hand of God"—but Wilson's Presbyterian God stemmed from a very different tradition than Bush's does, as Lieven perceptively explains.

What is Bush's tradition? Who are these demons? In the most original part of his book, Lieven analyzes at length the influences of this "second strand" of American nationalism, which resides in a culture dating back to Andrew Jackson and Southern evangelical tradition. Building on the work of Walter Russell Mead, T.R. Fehrenbach, David Hackett Fischer, and Michael Lind, among others, he describes how the much-noted "Southernization" of Republican politics in recent decades has had a deeper impact on our foreign policy than many of us have realized. The nation is now in the grip of a "radical nationalism" that traces its origins to the demographic makeup and mores of the South and of much of the West and Southern Midwest—in other words, what we know today as Red America.

As Lieven writes, this region was heavily settled by Scots-Irish immigrants whom King James I sent to Northern Ireland to clear out the native Celtic Catholics, which they did. Along with Anglo-Saxons, they then settled the American Frontier, moving westward from one piece of mean land to the next, suffering Indian raids and fighting for their lives every step of the way. The outcome was that a substantial portion of the new nation developed, over many generations, a rather savage set of mores. Thanks largely to this huge subpopulation, a quickness to fight and a dedication to total annihila-

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tion of any enemy has always been part of American culture. This tends to emerge in a "burst of chauvinist fury" and predominate during times of national crisis. Traditionally, it has also been balanced by a more diplomatic, communitarian Yankee sensibility from the Northeast and upper Midwest. Even so, the Southern Frontiersmen never got over their hatred of the East Coast elites and a belief in the morality and nobility of defying them. Their champion was the Indian-fighter Andrew Jackson, who resented the Eastern establishment's smug insistence that they, the backward Southern Frontiersmen, enforce U.S. treaties with the tribes when these same New Englanders had once slaughtered their own Indians.

Perceptively, Lieven likens this Southern/Frontier nationalism to the more classic kind of radical nationalism that emerges from the cumulative frustration of defeat often found in nations, say of Germany in World War I (and which in that particular case helped buttress Hitler's rise to power half a generation later). In this case, however, the frustration of the South and Southern Midwest over the rise of godless modernity at the hands of the North and the Easterners built up over a century and a half during which Southerners were derided as "peckerwoods and rednecks," as the former segregationist governor of Alabama, George Wallace, once put it. "The role of defeat in the genesis of nationalism resides not only in the defeat of a nation as a whole, but of classes, groups and indeed individuals within them," Lieven writes.

This particular class of Americans, with demographics and post 9/11 rage on its side, is now having its day in the sun, though its victory is incomplete. As Lieven observes, the American thesis prevents the descent into authoritarianism that nationalist frenzies so often produce elsewhere.

In the triumphant state of Texas in particular, Lieven writes, we can see "the mingling of the Southern and Western traditions" that made its first appearance during Jackson's presidency, and which today so defines our current politics, culture, and foreign policy. And nowhere is the backlash against the Eastern elitist tradition at the hands of this Southern/Frontier extremism and religiosity more obvious than in the personal history of the Bush family. Indeed, though Lieven does not note this, the person of George W. Bush himself best embodies this trend. In Bush there seems little trace left of the Eastern WASP sensibility into which he was born and educated, and which explains so much of his father's far more moderate presidency. He went to Andover, Yale, and Harvard, but he rebelled against the ethos he learned there. The transformation is complete, right down to the Texas accent that no one else in his family seems to have. Bush is a Jacksonian pod person.

The coarsened sensibility that this now-dominant Southernism and Frontierism has brought to our politics is unmistakable. Things seem to be out of whack. We have reimported creationism into our political dialogue (in the form of "intelligent design"). We routinely demonize organizations like the United Nations that we desperately need and which have been critical to the success of nation-building in Afghanistan. (The Texas GOP platform actually calls for the United States to kick the United Nations out of New York, as well as for U.S. withdrawal from the world body.) On foreign policy, the realism and internationalism of the Eastern elitist tradition once kept the Southern/Frontier warrior culture and Wilsonian messianism in check. Now the latter two, in toxic combination, have taken over our national dialogue, and the Easterners are running for the hills. The only Easterners who are left are the neocons, whose grand global construct, a kind of Nietzschean will to power—Michael Lind once described the neocons as the brains of the Southern evangelicals—only feeds this out-of-control messianism and a deep-seated distaste for globalism that goes back to the "don't-tread-on-me" attitude of the Southern/Frontier tradition. "In such circles," Lieven writes, "neither 9/11 nor the bloody occupation of Iraq had much effect on this underlying psychological stance." Nor is the fact that Bush has utterly depleted his Army in Iraq—and is supposedly pursuing a "new diplomacy"—likely to change the basic character of his foreign policy in his second term.

No matter what, those Jacksonian furies will out. Hence, Bush says that in his second term he is attaching new importance to diplomacy within the international community, and then he appoints as his U.N. ambassador John Bolton, an uncompromising libertarian whose lifelong goal has been to destroy America's affiliation with the international community. And on North Korea, Bush officials will acknowledge one day that they need China's diplomatic help to pressure Pyongyang into dismantling its nuclear program—and it's clear they do, since the president refuses either to attack or to negotiate. But then the hawks, with apparent approval from the White House, go out the next day and announce a renewed strategic alliance with Japan against China over the largely quiescent Taiwan issue. That's called shooting oneself in the foot. Yet the Bushies don't seem to be able to help themselves: The Jacksonian tradition seems to have an irrepressible bias toward war and an antibody to diplomacy.

So, too, the hard-edged Wilsonian impulses of the neocons, if unchecked by the realist tradition, will invariably go over the top, and indeed they already have. Bush now needs Russian President Vladimir Putin as an ally in order to pressure Iran, but because of his strident efforts to out-Wilson Wilson—declaring that the spread of democracy is his number one foreign policy goal—he's painted himself into a corner. Now, he needs to bring up Putin's anti-democratic excesses every time they meet or be called a hypocrite. Putin, not surprisingly, is on Iran's side. Expect four more years of bad blood.

Nor will Bush likely worry much about the now-settled mistrust of American power in Europe and elsewhere, which shows no signs of abating. Consider the little-noted surge of dissidence which Bush confronted on his most recent visit to Europe. It was Bush, not the Europeans, who shifted positions on Iran, opting (just barely) to

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negotiate. Sources later indicated that a decisive moment was when Bush sensed a united front by the Europeans against an Iranian nuclear weapon. But this united front did not occur by accident; sources say that Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schroeder, with Tony Blair's grudging assent, all compared notes and decided to gang up on Bush as the "European Union." Berlin and Paris decided they'd had enough of being humiliated, and that the European Union, not NATO, would now be the principal forum for dealing with America (in other words, a forum that does not include Washington). This could mark the beginning of a classic "balancing" that usually occurs against the major power on the global stage—but which America, because it had been viewed benignly until Bush, had managed to avoid until now. China, too, has been going its own way and, working behind Bush's back, has managed to induce the Europeans to lift their arms embargo. And several Latin American nations have begun to defy Bush on Cuba and other issues.

We may be witnessing, in other words, the unraveling of the global consensus in favor of the American-created-and-led system that has lasted for about 60 years, all largely thanks to the fecklessness of the Bush administration.

No doubt there are other explanations for why a nation that invented an international system that largely works in its favor would go about "kicking it to pieces."

One problem with Lieven's deconstruction of American nationalism is that it doesn't always add up. For example, he describes how a "violent hostility to other races" was at the core of the Jacksonian tradition. But if that's so, then why is a president who seems to have admirably overcome that unhappy legacy (he's now appointed two black secretaries of State and a Hispanic attorney general) still so enslaved to other aspects of Jacksonianism? Another explanation is the simpler one provided by John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, who note in their excellent *The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America* that the essence of "American conservatism" has always been to move out into the Great Space of America and invent new realities. Why should today's conservatives settle for the hoary reality created a half-century ago, which they never really liked anyway (it was built by Democrats)? Why not just build a new international system with America as hegemon?

Whatever the impetus behind Bush's radicalism, the good news for worried Americans is that this international consensus will still take a long, long time to destroy, in large part because of the pervasiveness and dominance of American power described above (Europeans still aren't boosting their defense budgets by much). It is true that, as Micklethwait and Wooldridge point out, the nation's population center is "moving south and west at a rate of three feet an hour, five miles a year." But pundits tend to overplay the significance of the "values shift" in the 2004 election. The outcome was far more about the fact that one side had a first-class campaigner and strategist (Bush and Karl Rove) while the other side put up rank incompetents (John Kerry and his masters of disaster, Bob Shrum and Tad Devine). If the Democrats can field a candidate only slightly more winning than Kerry, the Easterners will come down from the hills and rejoin the dialogue. The new power centers in the country, meanwhile, will be forced to quell their Jacksonian furies when they come to understand the necessity of an international consensus in the age of globalization (in other words, it means their jobs). And that will inevitably shift American foreign policy back into balance.

All of which points out Lieven's central error: He does not account for the fact that vast numbers of Americans—including very many in red states—hate where Bush is leading their country and share Lieven's criticisms. Instead he attempts, lamely, to argue that Democrats or moderate Republicans would probably be taking the country in the same direction as Bush Republicans have.

I tend to agree that in the run-up to the Iraq war there was a shameful failure on the part of American intellectuals to debate the ill-justified segue from al Qaeda to Saddam. This can be ascribed to an understandable excess of war fever and patriotism in the aftermath of 9/11, the somewhat demagogic manipulation of those feelings by the Bush administration, and the inability of the gelded Democrats to reclaim their legacy of internationalism and articulate a powerful alternative vision. But to advance his thesis Lieven tries to lump the centrist "progressive internationalism" of such judicious thinkers as Michael O'Hanlon and Michael McFaul together with the arch unilateralism of William Kristol and Richard Perle. This simply does not square with the facts. Even Colin Powell and Richard Haass, had they been able to run things, would have taken U.S. foreign policy in a very different direction. At the very least, they would not have invaded Iraq, and in the end, that decision would have made all the difference.

But because he's decided to attack American nationalism in every form, Lieven attacks everybody. To make his case, he cites, far too often for my taste, addled anti-imperialists of the left like Chalmers Johnson. He revisits the great triumphs of the 20th century in an offhanded way, finding them somehow wanting. He cavils, for example, over whether the astonishing transformations of Germany and Japan from vicious dictatorships into benign democracies after World War II—perhaps the greatest and potentially most enduring examples of nation-building in modern history—was really "nation-building" at all (what difference does the term make?). He remarks casually at another point that the "effects of the American ideology are akin to those of communism," a curious comment given that the "American ideology" has been a smashing success in the last century, and communism a long-debunked fraud.

It is not really until page 153, three quarters of the way through the book, that Lieven grudgingly notes that the dangerous "messianic" impulses he ascribes to the American Creed might have served some useful purpose

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(allowing America to be "the leader and bulwark of Western democracies against Nazism and then communism"). All in all, this is a topsy-turvy account of the last century, reminiscent of the tone-deaf newspaper reporter at the Gettysburg dedication who noted, in a long account of Edward Everett's bombast, that "the President also spoke."

Why does Lieven miss so much when he also gets so much? Perhaps his anger has got the better of him. It is telling that, in his preface, he ascribes "part of the genesis" of his book to a conversation he had with an arrogant American diplomat in 1989. The Soviets had just left Afghanistan, and to Lieven's dismay, the American insisted that the country would swiftly become a democracy. The diplomat was wrong, of course, and Lieven attributes the error to "the messianism rooted in the American Creed" along with "a total ignorance of Afghan history, society, tradition or reality in general." Lieven knew this history well, having studied the British experience in the 19th century. And he seems never to have recovered from his pique over this diplomat's insufferable arrogance.

This follows an old pattern, of course, in which idealistic and ignorant Americans insist they can create a brand-new reality, and world-weary Europeans roll their eyes. Transformational foreign policy of the kind that the United States has pursued over the last century is always a delicate balance of realism and idealism; of boldly setting out a vision and muddling through the bad parts. Europeans tend to deride this crusading approach even as they ultimately taste its fruits; we Americans tend to get the balance wrong and almost always botch things at first.

But somehow, after a lot of trial and error, American-style transformation does occur. There does seem to be a forward motion to human history. And there is no better proof than the extraordinary 86-year arc of American activism dating from Wilson's efforts at Versailles. Historians like Lieven, precisely because they are so steeped in past pitfalls, tend to short-shrift this effect. After the Taliban fell in December 2001, many Afghanistan specialists also expressed the view that the country would descend into warlordism again, and that Karzai would remain little more than "mayor of Kabul." Certainly, many said, democracy wasn't going to take root in such a wild and ungovernable place! But it does seem that Afghanistan is, at long last, changing. It is still a poppy-exporting, impoverished disaster area, yet democracy of some kind does seem to be taking root, and Karzai has exercised increasing control over the provinces. Lieven's diplomat may yet prove correct, just 20 years late.

Hulton Image Archive

Andrew Jackson, the original cowboy president (statue in Lafayette Park, adjacent to the White House)

Iraq is also a quagmire, and a horribly bloody one, but the lid may well stay on there as well, belying many of the regional experts who predicted that the fractious falsehood of a country pieced together by the British 85 years ago couldn't hold under anything but a strongman. And there may in fact be a larger democratic transformation occurring in the Arab world, from Lebanon to Egypt to Palestine. Critics shudder to think it, but perhaps in the long reach of history George W. Bush—Andrew Jackson's avenging spirit come to life—will be viewed as having been right. The reasons for the Iraq war were always murky, but no one who knows the Bushies believes for a moment that the invasion was ever just about WMD. For them, war was also necessary because, as one official told me before the war began, "an icebreaker" was needed to transform the frozen mass of dysfunction that is the Arab world. This is exactly what is happening: The ice is breaking.

The principal icebreaker causing most of this change, of course, has been American power, however arrogantly used and squandered. Yet Lieven's narrow view of American power does not give enough credit to these outcomes. Perhaps he should heed the advice of his countryman, Winston Churchill, who famously declared, "The Americans will always do the right thing ...after they've exhausted all the alternatives." We're still exhausting these, of course, and Anatol Lieven might think about cutting us a little slack.

Michael Hirsh is a senior editor at *Newsweek*, based in Washington, and author of *At War With Ourselves: Why America is Squandering Its Chance To Build a Better World*.

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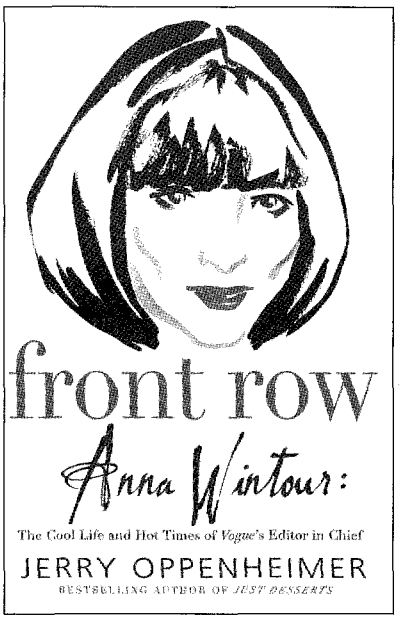
From Venus to Minerva

Most fashion magazines play on women's insecurities. Anna Wintour's *Vogue* plays on their ambitions.

By Christina Larson

Most women's magazines, in the guise of trying to help a gal get her life straight, introduce a dozen more things to start worrying about, from how your date ruins your diet to how your haircut holds back your career. But for most of its history, *Vogue* has presented the point of view of the woman who has already arrived. Unlike its glossy peers on the newsstand, it isn't loaded with tips to flatten your abs, flaunt your cleavage, or squeeze into your thin jeans by Friday; it assumes you need no help mastering love moves no man can resist. It doesn't purport to solve problems, to help you feel less guilty. Instead, it reminds women to take satisfaction, parading all manner of fineries (clothes, furniture, travel destinations) that a successful woman might buy, or at least admire. While it surely exists to sell ads—which it does remarkably well—it does so primarily by exploiting ambition, not insecurity.

The woman behind this commercial behemoth, editor in chief Anna Wintour, 55, a petite woman with a short bob and a penchant for Chanel suits and oversized sunglasses, first entered popular imagination a few years ago when a former assistant's novel, *The Devil Wears Prada*, painted Wintour as a vain and controlling woman who took pleasure in assigning impossible tasks to her cowering staffers (at one point, the fictionalized editor telephones from Paris to demand her assistant in New York track down a certain Parisian cab driver). Sometime after *Devil* hovered on *The New York Times* bestseller list for five months, Jerry Oppenheimer, author of unauthorized accounts of the lives of Martha Stewart, Barbara Walters, and the Clinton marriage, hit the *dirt* road, knowing there's a market for revealing powerful people as horrible neighbors.



Front Row, Anna Wintour: The Cool Life and Hot Times of Vogue's Editor in Chief
By Jerry Oppenheimer
St. Martin's Press, $24.95

Oppenheimer's *Front Row*, the first biography of Wintour, draws on interviews with erstwhile friends and embittered former employees, but received no help from its subject and minimal input from her current confidants. To Oppenheimer's dismay, he dug up little juicy gossip. And though he seems indifferent to the particulars of both the industry and execution of fashion (he depicts a teenage Wintour as wearing a "kicky, sexy outfit"—details, *please*), his book resembles a slideshow taken at a Paris runway show: Readers are treated to an alluring spectacle, but the parade feels strangely devoid of emotion or consequence, without a critical eye to direct our attention, to explain what's noteworthy in the collection. Oppenheimer has dumped the contents of his camera bag into our laps but made little attempt to make sense of the images captured on his film. Yet it's worth scrutinizing his negatives for clues as to how the editor of the nation's most profitable women's magazine has managed for 17 years to stay on top of what women want, even as women have continually redefined the nexuses between gender and work, between beauty and age.

Pretty, tough

To say that *Vogue* has long espoused a consistent point of view isn't to say that it hasn't evolved because, of course, what it means to be a satisfied woman has changed. In 1962, when ladies routinely derived their standing from the men in their lives, legendary socialite and editor Diana Vreeland took over a somewhat conventional fashion magazine and transformed *Vogue* into an eclectic Camelot-meets-Chelsea fusion of aristocratic refinement and bohemian wanderlust, a paean to wealth, irresponsibility, and elegance. Vreeland, who famously declared "the bikini is the most important invention since the atom bomb," brought models out of the studio, at the time a radical move, and staged photo shoots in exotic locations and fanciful domestic interiors, stoking

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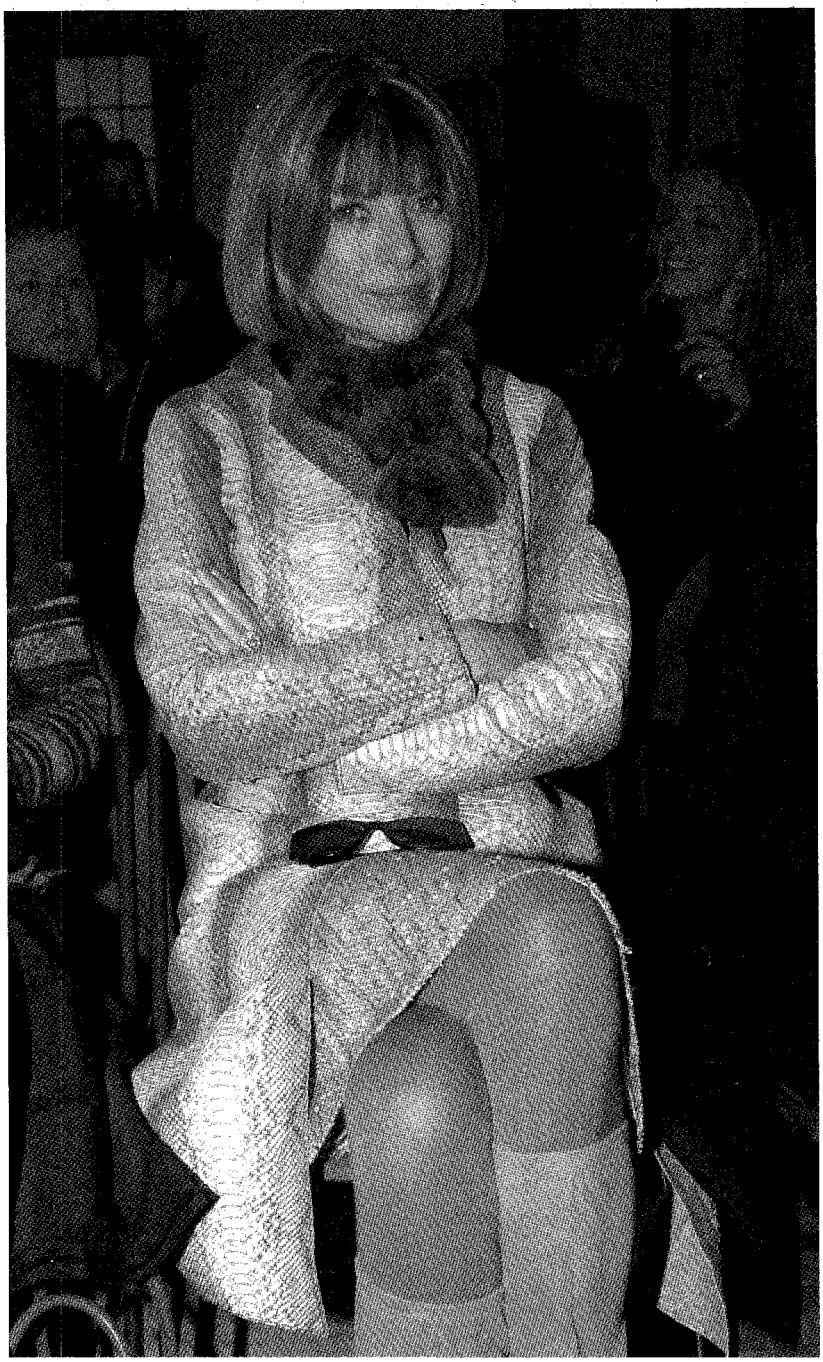

Vogue editor Anna Wintour in New York in 2004

Getty Images

the globe-trotting fantasies of the emerging jet set. She posed statuesque beauties with remote, otherworldly expressions lounging among the stones of ruined Colombian temples, as though the models themselves were divine beings. Vreeland, herself the wife of a rich and notably well-connected banker, later became Jackie Kennedy's fashion guru. At *Vogue*, she created a magazine for women in conspicuous possession of both luxury and leisure time—in essence for the wives of the most established men in the world.

Meantime, the teenaged Anna Wintour, daughter of a prominent British newspaper editor and an American heiress, had just dropped out of her fancy finishing school and was discovering the swinging '60s in London, living life as the Paris Hilton of her time—young, wealthy, self-possessed, pampered, achingly beautiful, precocious in attracting attention, and a magnet for interesting men (aristocrats, aspiring writers, underground newspaper editors). After some cursory details about her childhood (her well-heeled parents were introduced by the historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.), Oppenheimer's story gains traction as Wintour carouses at clubs frequented by the Beatles and the Stones, consumed with the era's flamboyant mix of optimism, rebellion, and rock & roll. She got her signature bob haircut at age 15, decided that it complemented her delicate features, and has varied it little over four decades.

She worked as a boutique shopgirl at Biba, a store Oppenheimer describes as "a glittering star in London's sixties fashion firmament," and then on the lowest rung of a British ladies' magazine. In 1975, Wintour, a yet more adventurous 25-year-old, hit the Big Apple in the midst of New York's decadent decade and the feminist revolution. After a brief run as a junior fashion editor at *Harper's Bazaar*, Wintour became the one-woman fashion department at *Viva*, the now defunct sister magazine to *Penthouse*, run by Bob Guccione's longtime girlfriend Kathy Keeton. There Wintour spent extravagantly, drawing on her inheritance as well as *Viva*'s monthly stipend, to lure prodigious photographers such as Helmut Newton and to stage shoots in the Caribbean and Japan. After Guccione pulled the plug in 1980, Wintour became a freelance fashion editor for *Savvy*, a new magazine aimed at the emerging breed of long-horizoned executive women: aspiring Reagan-era strivers with MBAs marching into uncharted territory in finance, government, and business.

In her early jobs, Wintour found herself passing through worlds in which the other staffers shared a common impulse or worldview while she observed from the margins and made few friends, neither a waiting-to-be-married debutante at *Harper's Bazaar*, a sexual liberationist at *Viva*, or a staunch feminist at *Savvy*. Her natural inclination, it seems, was to stand back and watch, not to participate. She did not invest herself in the success or failure of any ideological current, a detachment that arguably has served her well as an interpreter of aspirations, the fundamental task of a lifestyle magazine editor.

When she arrived at *New York* magazine in 1981, Wintour brought her own

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desk, which Oppenheimer describes as a "contemporary Formica-topped affair on two metal sawhorses as legs… along with a high-tech chrome-framed chair with a seat and back made of bungee cords," in effect embracing the fact of not blending into the newsroom as a deliberate professional stance. Put in charge of the fashion pages (and soon the home décor section), Wintour proved astute at spotting trends and assembling superb casts of clothing, models, and photographers. Yet Oppenheimer emphasizes that even "after almost a dozen years in the business, Anna still wasn't considered a writer," and quotes one associate editor assigned to write copy for Wintour's spreads: "She would sit down and *try* to tell me what point she was trying to make, or what was important about the clothes… [on one occasion] all she could say was, 'But they're so *witty*. Can't you see that, they're *witty* hats.'" This is surely interesting, though not, as Oppenheimer would have it, a repudiation of the talent ascribed to her. Wintour's skill has always been that of an entrepreneur and choreographer, valued for her eye and her intuition, not her words; as she discovered, it's quite possible to hire other people to write the copy.

In 1984, Wintour married David Shaffer, a South African psychiatrist who specialized in troubled teens. Less than two years later, she returned to London (while Shaffer stayed in New York) to become editor in chief of British *Vogue*. She announced to London's *Daily Telegraph*: "I want *Vogue* to be pacy, sharp, and sexy, I'm not interested in the super-rich or infinitely leisured. I want our readers to be energetic, executive women, with money of their own and a wide range of interests"—if not an entirely original sentiment, certainly an adept fusion of the outlooks of places she had hitherto been. She told the *Evening Standard*, the paper her father had once edited, "there is a new kind of woman out there. She's interested in business and money. She doesn't have time to shop anymore. She wants to know what and why and where and how."

In 1985, a French import, *Elle*, hit U.S. newsstands and quickly attracted a circulation approaching American *Vogue*'s million readers, stirring fear in the heart of Condé Nast mogul Si Newhouse, who saw that that his prize publication would have to redefine its niche to retain readers and advertisers. In 1988, Wintour was appointed editor in chief of *Vogue*. At the time, a gossipy piece by New York society columnist Liz Smith implied that Wintour's promotion owed to an intimacy with Newhouse that was more than a meeting of minds. Up to this point, Wintour had been labeled many things—a loner, a bully, a snob, a control freak (she once assigned a junior staffer to go through trash bags of film looking for one shot a photographer had refused to give her)—and she let most of these insults slide away with icy indifference. But Smith's article prompted a rare public frenzy, with Wintour calling a meeting of her new (and already intimidated) staff to vent. As a former coworker explained, "She was outraged—*outraged*—at the Liz Smith item and was not going to let it go by unanswered. She was very upset that people thought this was still a world in which women couldn't get ahead without sleeping with the boss."

What Wintour wrought

The biggest disappointment of *Front Row* is that it hardly seems interested in exploring what Wintour did *after* arriving at *Vogue*. On the personal front, Oppenheimer informs us that she avoids long editorial meetings, intimidates everyone but the gay staffers, and requires independent-minded photographers to courier Polaroids of scene set-ups for her to approve before commencing a shoot. Taking a cue from *Devil*, Oppenheimer depicts Wintour as controlling, someone who doesn't mind making people uncomfortable. But how did this woman who relishes power—exercising it in ways both profound and perverse—redefine the myth her magazine gave American women?

Wintour took the helm at *Vogue* in 1988, a year before Vreeland died. But her predecessor's vision of the *Vogue* woman, a lady of immense wit and leisure tossing off blithe quotes ("Work? What an interesting idea"; "Never worry about the facts, just project an image to the public") had already lost relevance. Vreeland's immediate successor, Grace Mirabella, continued a similar tradition (if less eccentric, still not quite modern), only to be replaced when she ignored Newhouse's entreaties to adapt. Wintour took over *Vogue* at a moment when the first generation of women with MBAs and more disposable income were hitting middle age and learning how to enjoy their success.

At *Vogue*, Wintour made a cult of top photographers like Helmut Newton and Annie Leibowitz, mixed jeans and couture, introduced an annual "power issue," favored celebrities on the cover, and declared the end of the era of the supermodel. In the September 2004 issue, at 832 pages the heftiest monthly magazine ever (a sign of formidable advertising support), her editor's letter pronounced: "Celebrated artists these days (actresses, usually) have a greater and more immediate appeal than models. The interesting question is, why so? It was not long ago, during the supermodel era, that Linda Evangelista and Cindy Crawford and Christy Turlington spoke to the public …" Though beauty standards are no less strict than they used to be—and it remains a handicap to be ugly in public arenas like politics or movies—women are no longer known *simply* for being beautiful. This isn't the world of Vreeland's *Vogue*. When Wintour featured Hillary Clinton on the cover in 1998, the first time a first-lady had ever appeared there, she explained to *The New York Times*: "[Hillary] is a woman of stature, and an icon to American women."

Wintour's magazine may actually have played a role in the decline of the supermodel mystique. She shifted *Vogue*'s focus from the cult of beauty to the cult of the creation of beauty. Vreeland had declared "elegance is innate," depicted models as divinities against Saharan skylines, kept the hair rollers out of sight, and asked readers to believe that a model's platinum curls had sprung fully formed like Athena from the head of Zeus. Wintour disassembled the myth of effortless beauty, invit-

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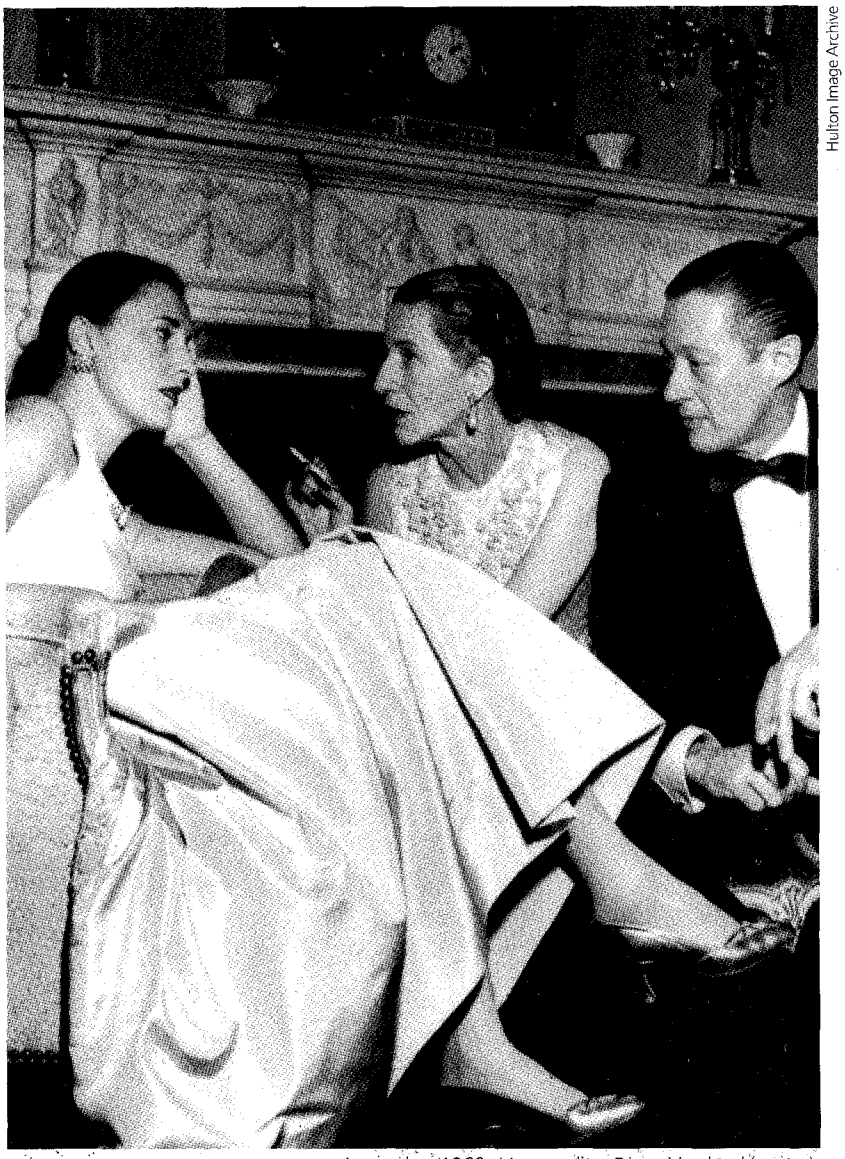
ed a slightly less-kept look into her pages, made it a point to credit the oft-overlooked artists essential to staging a cover shoot (photographers; make-up accessories, and hair stylists; page editors), and commissioned profiles of commanding women in varied fields, from Hillary Clinton to Vera Wang to Katie Couric, which chronicle the development of their fashion sensibility as a craft. Beyond whisking models off their pedestals, the concept that grace is a construction, and not merely a gift, allows that it can be enjoyed longer, well past the age of 40 or 50—a crucial point because in Wintour's world, most women won't reach the pinnacle of a career until later in life. The old idea that life beyond 30 must be a rearguard struggle for women riding on their looks simply isn't compatible.

One wonders how Wintour views fellow editor and icon Tina Brown, not just in gossipy terms (Oppenheimer tells us that while Brown was the editor of *Vanity Fair*, the two Brits competed for Newhouse's favor within Condé Nast), but in a more considered cultural context. Though only five years younger, Brown is in effect of a different generation. Wintour came of age during the youthquake and defiantly quit school; Brown reached adolescence during the feminist explosion, when more women expected to earn degrees and have careers, and graduated from Oxford. Wintour was among the last of an era in which ambitious women started as secretaries and wrestled their way up.

Vogue's prominent opening feature, following the editors' letters, is the "Nostalgia" column, a mediation on the intersection of social history and style icons. It often crystallizes the attitude Wintour has set for the magazine. In the March 2005 issue, the writer Mary Gordon, who evolved into a feminist at Barnard in the 1960s, recounts her experience as a preteen in the late 1950s, raised in a family that viewed fashion as frivolity, yet fascinated by the world of her babysitter's daughter, a woman aspiring to the universe of leisure and allure once evoked by Vreeland's *Vogue*:

"The baby-sitter's daughter believed in fashion. She was glamorous. She would have been nineteen that year, newly engaged. Every movement she made was slow and provisional; she was languid by nature, and her two plainer sisters served her. She lay on her bed and smoked cigarettes and slowly turned the pages of magazines … On the top of her dresser, always in disarray, was a collection of items that puzzled and fascinated me: tweezers, tubes, pencils, eyelash curlers… Although I was supposed to be watching cartoons, I was drawn to her room … for hints in the creation of my future womanly self.

"But one day I learned that the babysitter's daughter was of no use to me either. I read a letter she had written to her fiancé. It began 'Dear Darling.' I knew that was a mistake, and from then on, her way of being female seemed to me slothful and error-ridden. When I called the fiancé to mind, I saw him as he really was: a small, balding, sweating man, said to be 'on his way up in the bank,' always seeming to be waiting for suggestions or orders."



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Legendary 1960s *Vogue* editor Diana Vreeland (center)

Wintour didn't pen those words, but they surely echo the tone she set and now resolutely polices at *Vogue*. The column, like the magazine, does not repudiate glamour itself, but an older style of glamour, one in which for women social status and real power remained distinct virtues, and feminine beauty served only the former. Wintour's *Vogue* allows women to imagine a world, increasingly an attainable one, in which the pursuit of beauty reinforces rather than overshadows female authority.

Christina Larson is the managing editor of *The Washington Monthly*.

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They Might Be Giants

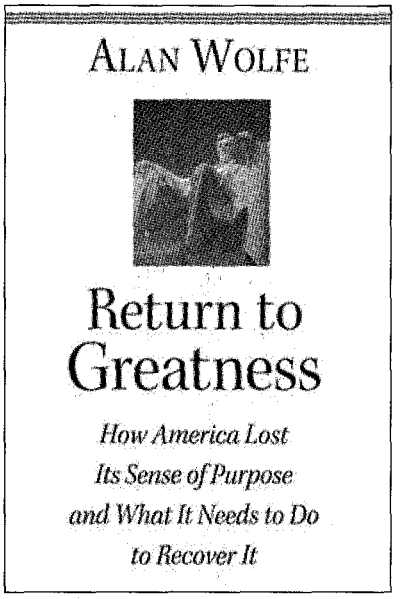
Alan Wolfe says Democrats can reclaim the mantle of American greatness.

By Bruce Reed

February 2005 marked a milestone, of sorts, for America: Since the 9/11 attacks, we fought the war on terror for 41 months—the same length of time it took our grandparents' America to go from being attacked at Pearl Harbor to winning World War II in Europe.

Except for American troops, whose heroism has spanned the generations, our time does not stack up well by comparison. By May 1945, the United States had rallied the world to crush fascist totalitarianism and was hosting 50 allied nations to charter the United Nations. By February 2005, by contrast, the United States had splintered the world's resolve to stamp out Islamic totalitarianism, weakened the United Nations, and damaged historic alliances. Three and a half years into the war on terror, no V-E Day is in sight, unless Bush counts his reelection as a victory over France.

Perhaps the most dispiriting contrast between then and now is closer to home. In the wake of the attacks on Pearl Harbor, FDR transformed a struggling, isolationist nation into the greatest economic and military power on earth, laid the groundwork for the most dramatic explosion of middle-class opportunity in history, and unleashed a spirit of sacrifice and responsibility we have prized for 60 years since. In the wake of 9/11, George W. Bush has corroded America's economic engine, mismanaged the military, concentrated wealth, and fostered an ethic of debt and irresponsibility that will force our children to sacrifice for 60 years hence.



Return To Greatness: How America Lost Its Sense of Purpose and What It Needs to Do to Recover It
By Alan Wolfe

Princeton University Press, $22.95

Like FDR, Bush was handed the chance to make America great. But Bush has made us go broke instead.

Is it too late to make America great again? That is the question Alan Wolfe asks in *Return to Greatness: How America Lost Its Sense of Purpose and What It Needs to Do to Recover It.*

Wolfe argues that America's history has been a long struggle between a few Roosevelts and Lincolns who have challenged America to be great, and a swarm of Bushes and McKinleys who aimed low and achieved even less. While George W. Bush wants to be judged on the sweep of his ambitions, Wolfe explains that the test of greatness is courage and results, not audacity. "Bush's presidency demonstrates that rejecting greatness when it is providentially offered," writes Wolfe, takes leadership "of a particularly perverse sort."

A few Republicans, led by John McCain, have urged their party to reclaim the "national greatness" mantle of Teddy Roosevelt. And, indeed, as Wolfe reminds us, "the first to speak seriously in recent years of national greatness were conservatives such as William Kristol."

"There did exist at one time," he writes, "a Republican Party that tried to act as the conscience of the nation," represented by leaders such as Nelson Rockefeller, John Lindsay, Kingman Brewster, and Elliot Richardson. But no longer. A party truly committed to national greatness would work to make the nation stronger, not hobble its government, divide its people, and starve its armed forces to pay for tax cuts.

Any true national greatness movement, then, will have to come from the Democrats. Of course, that will require a few basics in short supply: a clear sense of national purpose, an unflinching commitment to national strength, and a cadre of national leaders who measure greatness by how much they ask of Americans, not how much they promise.

At first glance, Democrats hardly seem poised for greatness. Consider the two questions most on Democratic minds since November: the DNC's battle to find the next Terry McAuliffe and the party-wide drumbeat to find a Democratic Karl Rove. We're searching, all right—but not for heroes.

Alan Wolfe is right: It's time to lift our sights. History is handing us the chance to reach for the brass ring that

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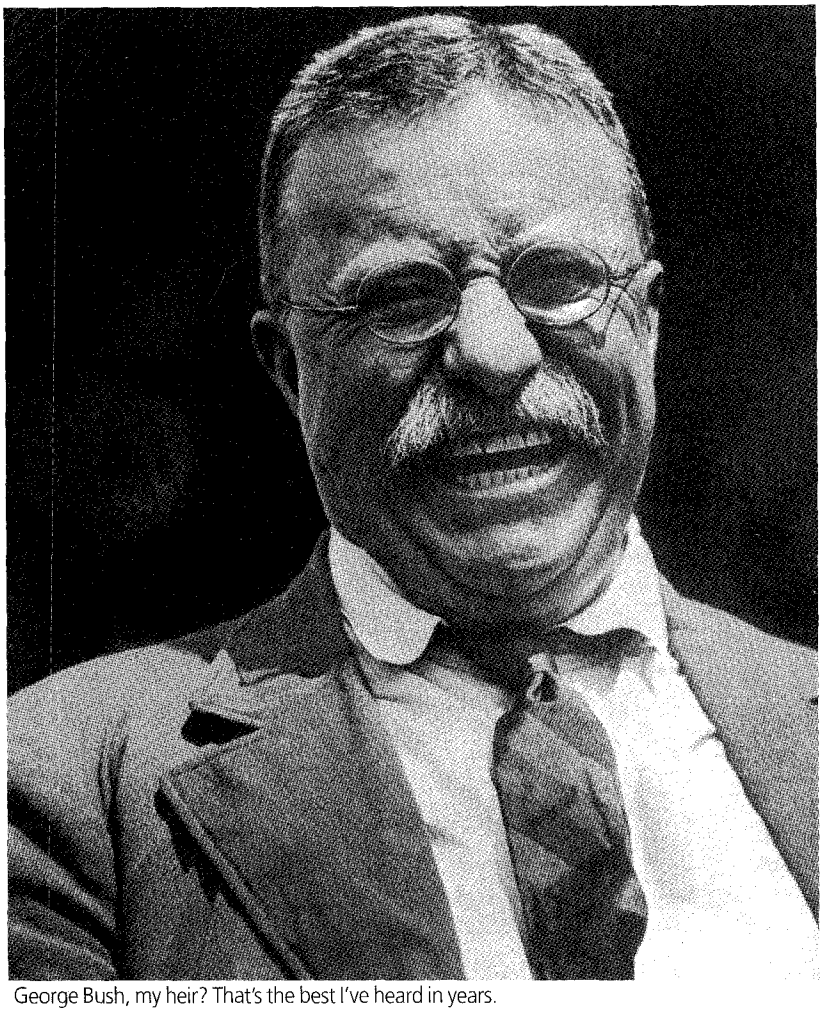

George Bush, my heir? That's the best I've heard in years.

Bush fumbled, and we can't afford to take a pass.

What could Democrats do to reach for the stars, instead of just posing with them? Wolfe's most refreshing idea is to rebuild institutions that once were great but now have dwindled—"political parties capable of aggregating and mobilizing citizens; interest groups that crave members and not just contributors; labor unions that seek to create and not only to protect jobs; business firms that invest in those who work for them." Wolfe's own agenda for the next great president is nothing new— universal health care, a living wage, better schools. But his close analysis of past greatness suggests three clear prerequisites for its return.

First, as Wolfe suggests, making America great begins with a willingness to use force on behalf of America's ideals in the world. The true liberal must fight for liberty abroad and at home, not pooh-pooh historic elections in Iraq while whining that Ohio was stolen. Wolfe acknowledges that Democrats now must overcome two syndromes—Iraq and Vietnam— but hopes that doing so might find the ideal synthesis: a renewed willingness to use force, tempered by a renewed appreciation for having allies at our side.

Second, a great nation must make reform its great cause here at home. Wolfe stresses that our best presidents have been bold and pragmatic at the same time—adopting FDR's "bold, persistent experimentation" to find the right means, but throwing the full force of the nation toward achieving ambitious ends. The Bush administration has offered the worst of both worlds—big government with narrow, political ambitions. That's how we ended up with a Medicare prescription drug law that costs taxpayers $1.2 trillion without saving seniors money.

A great nation needs a strong government, not a big one. That means flushing out the toxins that weaken our democracy: Congressional districts gerrymandered to ensure that incumbents never lose; a tax code riddled with corporate loopholes designed to stifle free-market competition; and a revolving door that turns Washington into the ultimate reality show, in which senior government officials compete to win top jobs at powerful lobbies.

Third, and perhaps most important, a nation needs leaders who bring out the best in citizens. Wolfe faults liberals for relying on interest groups that put their own interests ahead of the nation's, and conservatives for waging a culture war that (as he argued in an earlier book, *One Nation, After All*) would not otherwise exist. Our consultant-driven politics has become an exercise in mutually assured demagoguery—the party of purple hair versus the party of purple fingers.

Every great president, by contrast, has tried to lift his nation up. FDR responded to totalitarian attack by making all Americans do their part, from victory gardens and the factory floor to Normandy and the Battle of the Bulge. Where FDR told citizens, "Uncle Sam wants you," Bush effectively told Americans, "Pardon the interruption." In the 2004 campaign, George W. Bush and John Kerry should have been competing to inspire service and sacrifice. But instead of pressing for voluntary universal service, they tried to outbid each other in opposition to the draft.

Nations, like heroes, are made, not born. As Alan Wolfe points out, our greatest presidents have always found the courage to remind us of responsibilities we might otherwise pass by, and tapped the latent greatness that is imprinted in the American character.

Three and a half years after 9/11, America is not what it could have been, at home or abroad—and now George W. Bush has four more years to make that gulf wider still. But the quintessential American desire to reach for higher purpose, so lost on this president, waits to be awakened by the next. You can't keep a great land down.

Bruce Reed is president of the Democratic Leadership Council.

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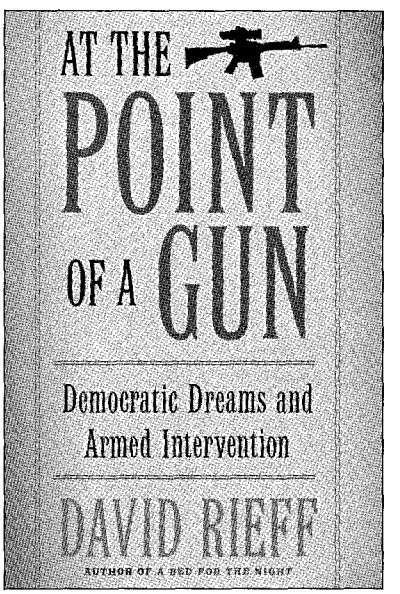
From Sarajevo to Baghdad

David Rieff's muddled second thoughts on humanitarian intervention.

By Jacob Heilbrunn

David Rieff is always a pleasure to read. In a field distinguished mostly by the clotted prose and lawyerly analysis of think tank denizens looking to secure their next political appointment, Rieff has been a welcome exception. His mission has been to prick the conscience of the West. In *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West*, he chronicled the passivity of the Clinton administration and western European governments as the Serbs conducted a genocidal war, while also articulating a sound case for humanitarian military intervention. Now, in *At the Point of a Gun*, he performs something of a U-turn. Reflecting on the Bush administration's expansive foreign policy ambitions, Rieff has had a change of heart about intervention. Looming over his book is the shadow of the Iraq War, and where Rieff once championed a kind of liberal imperialism, he now emerges as a chastened critic of intervention abroad, cocking a skeptical eye at both liberal human rights activists and neoconservatives.

Though Rieff's book consists of previously published essays, this is no tedious exercise in rehashing the past. Rieff has produced a vivid, if sometimes inadvertent, depiction of the agonies and internal contradictions of liberalism. The result is a kind of running warfare between Rieff I and Rieff II over the merits of intervention.



At the Point of a Gun: Democratic Dreams and Armed Intervention
By David Rieff
Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, $29.95

As Rieff acknowledges, his endorsement of intervention in the 1990s was based upon the conviction that it is immoral for the United States to remain idle in the face of genocide. In the aftermath of Kosovo, he says, it was clear that "there will be many more Kosovos in the coming decades. . . . Better to grasp the nettle and accept that liberal imperialism may be the best we are going to do in these callous and sentimental times." But his certainty apparently melted as the Iraq war turned into a protracted occupation. In fact, in his essay "The Specter of Imperialism," Rieff lays primary blame for what he considers the indiscriminate use of U.S. firepower abroad not at the feet of the neoconservatives, but on the humanitarian left. For example, he questions Samantha Powers's Pulitzer Prize-winning *A Problem from Hell*, condemning her for a faith in a series of good outcomes from a single foray into this benign imperialism. Powers, according to Rieff, has a wishful rather than realistic approach to foreign policy that unwittingly resembles the Bush administration's. This is laying things on a little thick. While Powers has maintained that the track record of the United States consists of finding reasons not to intervene, she never called for toppling Saddam Hussein. Indeed, the Bush administration maintained that it was necessary to attack Iraq, not on humanitarian grounds, but because it allegedly posed a dire and imminent threat to the United States. Absent the fear of weapons of mass destruction, it's doubtful that Congress would have endorsed the war.

But Rieff doesn't stop here. He goes on to excoriate the entire human rights community, which he thinks maintains a naive belief that it is possible to impose Nuremberg-style justice without Nuremberg-style military occupations of the countries where war criminals live. Rieff will have none of this. As Rieff II, he observes, "These human rights regimes will be imposed by force of arms or they will not be imposed at all, and it is disingenuous of a human rights movement that, wittingly or unwittingly over the course of the 1990s, set the moral

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table for the new imperial mood in America, to suddenly recoil from the Bush administration's Captain Reynault-style because, shock, horror, they're unilateralist, Bible-thumping, gun-loving, anti-civil liberties reactionaries."

But if human rights is now the official ideology of the American empire—with the neocons as its premier exegetes but the left as its author—Rieff gives the neocons credit for at least having the courage of their convictions in calling for imperialism. The true frauds, he thinks, are the deracinated, parliament-of-man types at Human Rights Watch who act as though their aims can be achieved bloodlessly. Rieff would like to be able to endorse the case for a liberal empire, but what terrifies him is the almost inevitable slide, as he sees it, from liberation to occupation, from altruism to barbarism, that occurs when the United States tries to remake a country like Iraq.

How persuasive is Rieff's account? Rieff scores many telling points about the naiveté of the human rights community. But his contention that there will be "many more Kosovos" in the future left me doubtful. Rieff seems to be captive to the conflicts of the 1990s, seeing in them an augury of the future rather than a remnant of Europe's past. But stepping back from Rieff's gloom, it could reasonably be argued that these ethnic conflicts have largely exhausted themselves. Meanwhile, ongoing ethnic struggles, such as that of Chechnya, could easily have been avoided with negotiated settlements. Even the battles and mass murder in Africa could be seen more as the fallout of colonization than a sign of endless warfare.

Then there is the case of Iraq, which is not anything like Kosovo. Yet Rieff somewhat contradictorily assumes that Iraq is the template for future intervention and that its maladroit execution thoroughly discredits the entire notion of humanitarian military action. But as Rieff himself admits, Iraq was not really about humanitarian intervention, or at least it wasn't packaged that way. Instead, the administration grossly inflated the threat of weapons of mass destruction in order to scare Congress and the public into endorsing an invasion. Only retroactively has the plight of the Kurds and Shiites, which did trouble administration figures like Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, been dusted off as the rationale for toppling Hussein. Rieff's uneasiness about intervention is understandable, but his logic is twisted in knots and he ends up wanting to have it both ways. On one hand, he approves of coming to the rescue in Kosovo; on the other, he doesn't want the United States plunging into Darfur. But if the United States can help or work together with allies, why shouldn't it try to alleviate the plight of the suffering? It's just as simplistic to say that Iraq wholly taints intervention as it is to say that Kosovo wholly justifies it.

In the aftermath of Iraq, Rieff seems to have become as tortured as Goethe's Faust complaining that there are "two souls in my breast." Rieff I wants to charge ahead and stop genocide; Rieff II believes it's counterproductive, or at least too morally ambiguous to support. The most likely cause of this floundering is that considerations of U.S. national interest never intrude upon his meditations. But security interests must play a role; Clinton entered the Bosnian conflict because the damage to NATO's credibility was becoming impossible to overlook as the Serbs held U.N. peacekeepers hostage and made a mockery of European protestations that they could handle the crisis by themselves.

Nor does Rieff convincingly back his claim that the liberal left is culpable for the invasion of Iraq. Sure, human rights organizations pointed to atrocities against the Kurds and other abuses perpetrated by Saddam's security services. But they also do the same in a variety of other countries, including Tibet. No one is arguing for a U.S.-led invasion of Tibet because events in that corner of the world don't really impinge on U.S. security interests. What Rieff might have argued is that, after two successful interventions in the Balkans, liberals became rather complacent about supporting a war of liberation in Iraq. But even in Iraq, Rieff simply dismisses the invasion rather than assessing what price is worth paying to liberate and occupy a foreign country.

In his current fit of despondency, Rieff skates over these questions and problems. Without some standard for intervention, however, it's inevitable that Rieff will lurch back and forth, arbitrarily selecting which military intervention he backs. As emotionally satisfying as it may be to lament the state of the world, it's no way to create a liberal foreign policy that plausibly challenges Bush's vision of a democratic crusade.

Jacob Heilbrunn is an editorial writer for the *Los Angeles Times*.

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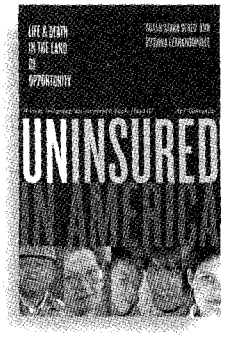

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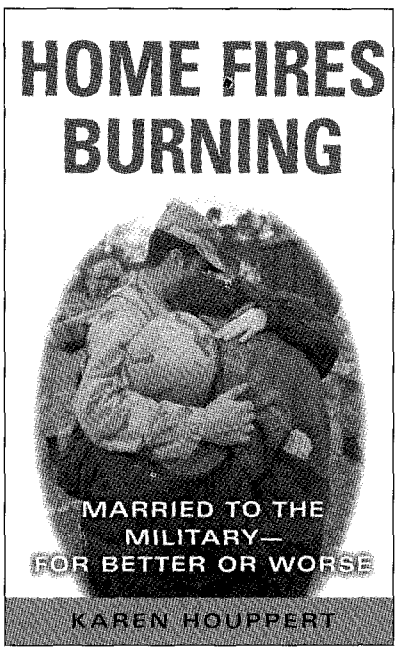
Home Alone

The stunted lives of military wives.

By Clara Bingham

It all starts with that uniform. "I have uniform syndrome," Heather Atherton says. "I'm not proud of it. I see a guy in uniform, though, and I think they look 10 times better. They're clean-cut and they always have a job." When Heather married 24-year-old Army Specialist Kris Atherton, only eight weeks after they first met (she was pregnant), she also instantly achieved a level of financial security that she had never known growing up in a small town in Kansas, where her single mother worked two jobs. Some of the perks of being married to the military include free medical care, free housing, free utilities, free marital counseling, free drug counseling, free alcohol counseling, free financial advice, subsidized childcare, food and other necessities sold at cost, tuition assistance, free gym membership, free pool membership, and free swimming lessons for the kids. Movie tickets at the base theater cost only $2.50. What could possibly be wrong with this picture?

Plenty, says Karen Houppert, a *Village Voice* writer who spent two years interviewing a group of wives living at cold, windswept Fort Drum army base in upstate New York, as well as wives at other bases around the country. Her reporting reaches from the last days of the war in Afghanistan into the first year of the invasion of Iraq and provides an essential and much overlooked view inside Planet Military.



Home Fires Burning: Married to the Military-- For Better or Worse
By Karen Houppert
Ballantine Books, $24.95

"The big hidden cost for service members, of course, is that they may go to war and die," says Houppert. Or if they don't die, they could go to war and not come home for a year or two. Or they could come back maimed: Kris Atherton returned from Iraq with an amputated arm and a case of Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome.

Houppert's account of life as a military wife strips the veneer off of headlines announcing American casualties in Iraq and exposes the toll war takes on families at home. But more than just a chronicle of war widows' grief, her book shows us how day by day these spouses earn the right to boast, as it says on a Fort Bragg minivan bumper sticker: "Army wife: the toughest job in the Army." Military spouses cope with childcare hassles, teenage moodiness, car pools, lawn care—all the same challenges parents face in the civilian world. Only they do it alone. For months at a time—all the while never knowing if their husbands will make it back safely.

The lives of families on the 170 military bases are, as Houppert describes it, closely prescribed by a "labyrinth of rules." At Fort Drum, home to 8,800 family members and 11,000 soldiers, a 129-page "Resident's Guide to Family Housing" spells out prohibitions against the use of clotheslines, trampolines, fences, waterbeds, ceiling fans, gardens, and wallpaper borders (except by special dispensation). Grass must be kept below four inches in height. Kool-Aid should not be served near carpeted areas. Children cannot leave toys on the sidewalks. Holiday lights may be lit only from dusk until 10 p.m. and should be removed by the second week in January. Dogs must have an identifying microchip inserted in their ears and there is a two-pet maximum. Even the logistics and protocol of death and military burial are carefully orchestrated down to the dress blue uniforms worn by the casualty notification officers, or "notifiers," to every sentence they utter, to the brand new 70,000-square-foot morgue built in Dover, Del., with room for 380 military caskets.

The other hidden cost for soldiers and their families "is a demand that they surrender self-determina-

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Support group for military wives at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

tion to the institution." Handbooks for military wives suggest that they should not complain to husbands overseas because it is their responsibility to help strengthen their spouses' morale. By maintaining a happy home, wives are being patriots and doing their bit for the country, the military, and their husbands' careers. Not until 1988 did the DOD stop the practice of incorporating commentaries on a wife's behavior in her husband's job review, but there is still overt disapproval when the authorities find Mrs. GI Joe failing to put *his* career first. Realizing that their soldiers aren't going to be happy unless their families are, the Army has tried to provide support through its Army Family Team Building program. But such programs go only so far in countering the loneliness and isolation that comes with being a military spouse.

There are, for instance, Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) which function as support groups for military wives. FRGs engage in such morale-boosting activities as raising money to send supplies to soldiers and organizing phone trees to keep wives totally up to date about unit mobilizations. Wives often volunteer as much as 40 hours a week at their local FRG—partly because they can't get paying jobs. Military bases are located in remote areas where skilled jobs are scarce; even when employment is available, families are transferred from base to base so frequently that it is hard for wives to keep jobs. Also, the husbands' long absences mean that neither parent would be home to provide child care were the wife working outside the home. Given these three factors, very few military wives are able to develop meaningful careers. Some of them find a sense of community, self-worth, and patriotism when they volunteer at their FRGs, but others who happen to have jobs or choose to volunteer off base, feel pressured to participate. When one army wife Houppert profiled criticized her FRG in the "Military Spouse" column of Fort Drum's local paper, she was treated like a heretic.

But the greatest sin is to speak out against any war to which the troops may be assigned. Houppert had trouble convincing wives who opposed the Iraq war to talk to her because they did not want their views published. Being anti-war is a gateway drug to that other seditious offense, Hurting Your Husband's Career. One former female soldier told Houppert that people were afraid to criticize any army policy in the post newspaper. "It's ironic that we're charged with defending all these freedoms we're denied as members of the military."

Interestingly, Houppert dispenses with the question of male military spouses in her introduction, where she argues that 94 percent of military spouses are wives. Still, I find this omission significant in light of the rising numbers of women in the military and newsmagazine cover stories asking what happens when mom goes to war. As of 2002, (according to the Women's Research & Education Institute) 15 percent of U.S. service personnel were women, and approximately 10 percent of U.S. forces deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan are women.

The most chilling chapter in

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Home Fires Burning describes the serious problem with domestic violence on the base, or to use yet another military euphemism, the "spousal aggression issue." It turns out that the rate of domestic violence in the military is two to five times higher than in the civilian population. Houppert goes back to the country's largest military base, Fort Bragg, N.C., where in the summer of 2002 four wives were murdered, allegedly by their husbands or ex-husbands, in a six week period. That summer of 2002, it was statistically more dangerous to be an army wife than a Fort Bragg soldier. Houppert tells the lesser-known story of Tabitha Croom, a former stripper who was murdered in 1999 at Fort Bragg. The evidence pointed to Croom's Special Forces boyfriend, but in a classically oxymoronic case of "military justice," the murder was never prosecuted and the suspect was honorably discharged. Croom's case is one of so many that prove that the military justice system is built on an inherent conflict of interest. "Military courts-martial were created with a primary goal: maintaining control in the ranks. Justice was secondary," writes Houppert.

Karen Houppert was 14 in June 1977 when her 36-year-old father's T-33 airplane crashed into a potato field outside Brussels on a routine mission, a searing experience which has given her a special kind of emotional access to her subjects. She does an excellent job of capturing the hardships they face. Yet Houppert doesn't spend much time on the many women (and some men) who willingly chose to marry into the military and are proud of the sacrifices they make. Houppert has given us an important and wrenching coming-of-age story of an entire sector of women who, because their husbands chose such an honorable profession, are often prohibited from "being all that they can be."

Clara Bingham is the author of *Women on the Hill* and co-author of *Class Action*.

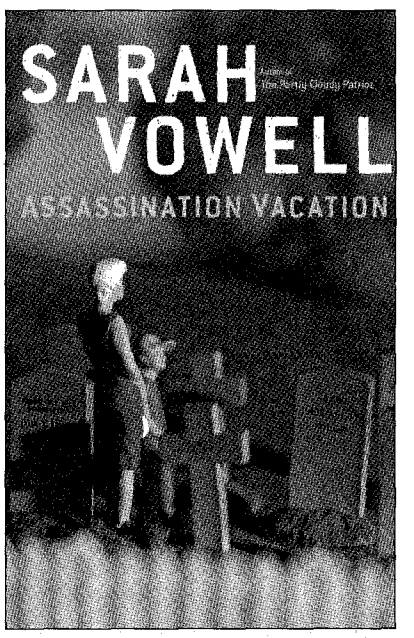
What a Way To Go

Sarah Vowell's morbidly funny tour of presidential assassination sites.

By Jamie Malanowski

About half way through *Assassination Vacation*, Sarah Vowell's account of her visits to numerous and various sites associated with America's first three presidential assassinations, she talks about taking a self-guided tour of James Garfield's Washington. "The prospect is more titillating than one might think," she says, as though the opposite was even possible. Since most of the sites are unmarked or have been torn down, she says she feels she knows secrets, and this pleases her. "It's just a small, pleasant buzz to amble around and watch the city come alive with forgotten men."

A lot of forgotten men get brought up in this book, and reading does instill a feeling that is small and pleasant (though if a buzz is what you're after, you're more apt to be successful just by overdoing the Robitussin a bit.) Vowell, who is a contributing editor to public radio's "This American Life," has written for *McSweeney's* and other publications, and supplied the voice of teenage superhero Violet Parr in Pixar's *The Incredibles*, is a good companion for a journey of this sort.



Assassination Vacation
By Sarah Vowell
Simon & Schuster, $21.00

She neither apologizes nor justifies this odd interest of hers, can from time to time turn a phrase (the McKinley National Monument in Ohio looks like "a gray

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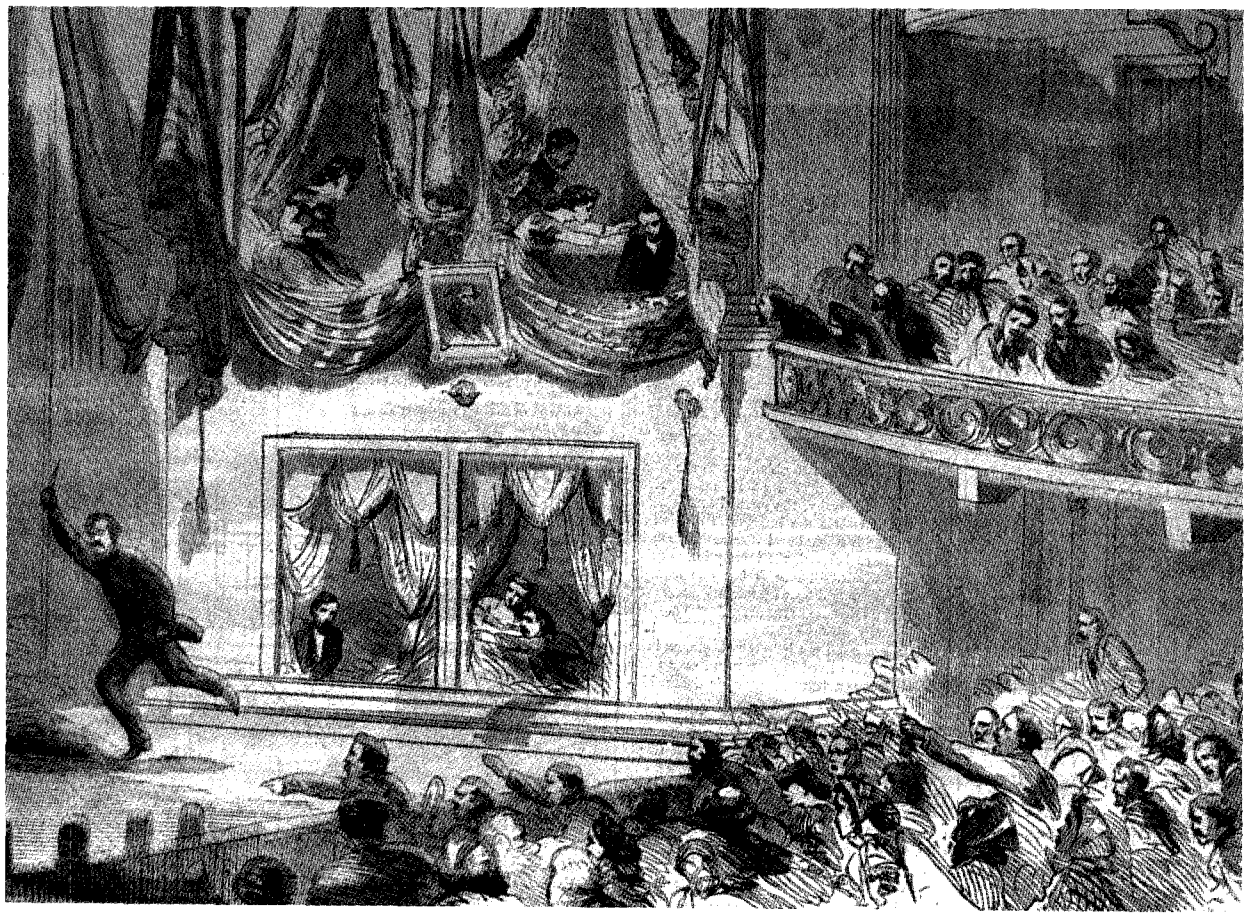
granite nipple on a fresh green breast of grass") and has a nice sense of humor both about herself and the scenes she encounters. At one point Vowell notes that John Wilkes Booth's fame as an actor enabled him to move freely between the North and South, an ability that the Confederate Secret Service was able to exploit. "There is a lesson here for the terrorists of the world: If they really want to get ahead, they should put less energy into training illiterate 10-year-olds how to fire Kalashnikovs and start recruiting celebrities like George Clooney. I bet nobody's inspected that man's luggage since the second season of 'ER.'"

Vowell is very well-read on these murders and displays a knowledge of the surroundings and supporting players that marks the true fan. More importantly, she has pretty good taste, and one senses her taking almost personal pride and satisfaction in her selection and presentation of certain anecdotes, as though she had brought them out just for you. I was delighted to see that amid a sea of Lincoln arcana, Vowell chooses to devote the better part of a page to the last line in "Our American cousin" that was delivered just before Booth pulled the trigger. A character called Lord Dundreary, having been accused by a Mrs. Mountchessington of "not being used to the manners of good society," replies, "Don't know the manners of good society, eh? Wal, I guess I know enough to turn you inside out, old gal—you sockdologizing old man-trap." Booth waited for the roar of laughter that followed this line to cover the report of his gun. This piece of minutia has long held me in fascination, though I can't say why. "Sockdologizing," by the way, means manipulative.

Vowell's taste is more suspect when she hits the road and visits many historical and many, many more merely tangentially historical locales. Though her enthusiasm usually suffices to carry us through these visits (and she is enthusiastic; at one point she says, I believe in utter seriousness, that her fantasy is to become a docent), her efforts to evoke some larger vibe from them often fall short.

Visiting the site of Booth's death, she uncovers, in the book's single most disturbing scene, a makeshift memorial to him, constructed by some current admirer. Afterwards, though, we visit a schlocky souvenir shop where the proximity of knickknacks bearing Confederate flags to knickknacks bearing American flags is something she tries to elevate into a moment of profundity. She fails. Nor does she attain real depth when, at the Florida fortress where a Lincoln assassination conspirator was imprisoned, she gazes off towards Guantanamo and thinks about the Taliban detained there. Nor does she attain it when she's in Buffalo thinking



1865 engraving of Lincoln's assassination

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about the way the city was lit up for McKinley's visit to the Pan American Exposition, "and all that beauty was made possible because George Westinghouse of Buffalo harnessed Niagara Falls into his alternating current, the same current that would soon be used to fry Leon Czolgosz in the electric chair." It takes a writer of some considerable deftness to keep such observations from sounding melodramatic; Ms. Vowell is not yet that writer.

Part of the problem is that she hunts for profundity as though her interest in these moments and her visits to these places has to be validated by finding something LARGER. For example, Vowell is surprised that when she visits Lincoln's law office in Springfield, she doesn't get any charge from visiting a place she's obviously looked forward to visiting for quite some time. "I can't quite put my finger on why I'm not feeling anything. I came here to get closer to Lincoln. So why is it that I feel closer to him sitting on my couch reading my paperback copy of his *Selected Speeches and Writings* than I do here. . .staring at the actual couch where he read his beloved newspapers and Shakespeare?" Well, maybe because his spirit lives in those speeches, while only his ass lived on that couch.

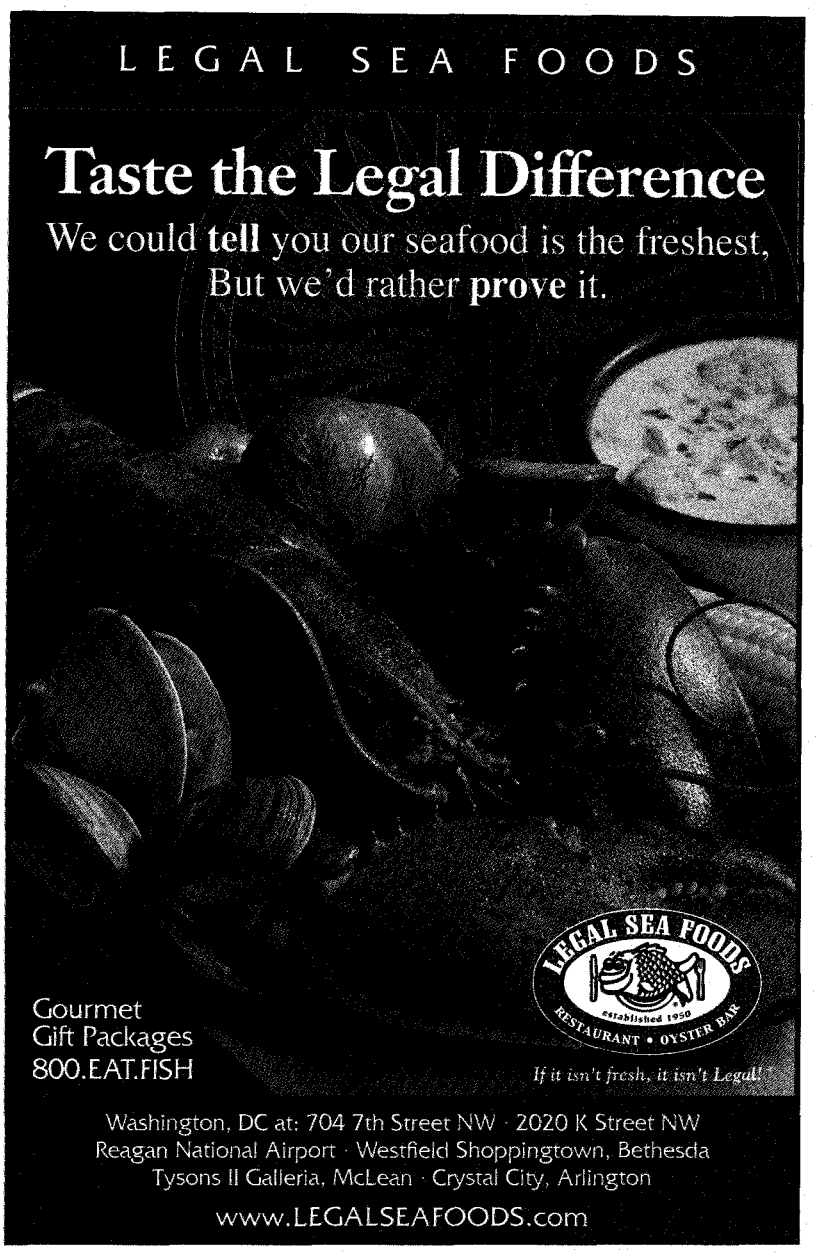
There are several curious omissions in the book. First, Vowell doesn't deal with the Kennedy assassination, a moment significantly more important than Garfield's and McKinley's. Perhaps visiting all the sites connected to the various competing conspiracy theories would have ripped a hole in her travel budget of the size that sank the Lusitania.

Second, Vowell mentions but does not delve into an interesting coincidence in the Garfield and McKinley killings, which is that each man lingered for some time after being shot. McKinley lasted eight days, which included an improvement which caused everyone to think he was on the road to recovery. Garfield lasted an astonishing two and a half months. In this CSI-infested era, I for one was deeply disappointed that Vowell didn't explore the wounds, the after-effects, and the various treatments that what were no doubt the best medical minds available perpetrated on these chief executives.

Finally, I'm sorry Vowell never examines the source of her morbid interests. In one of her funnier passages, she acknowledges that her deep fascination with death has long placed her outside the mainstream (classmates nicknamed her Wednesday, after the daughter of Gomez and Morticia Addams.) She's not obliged to explain anything, of course, but after spending a couple hundred pages with her as she pursues these heinous crimes and terrible tragedies to the hitherest hither and the yonderest yon, the question really asks itself. The closest she comes is to say without elaboration that "these creepy historical flukes offer momentary relief from the oppression of chaos. ... They give order to the universe."

No. Sarah Vowell, with her clever mind, gives order to the universe, although only on about the same level that the Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon game does. A feeling small and pleasant results.

Jamie Malanowski is a New York writer and columnist for *The Washington Examiner.*



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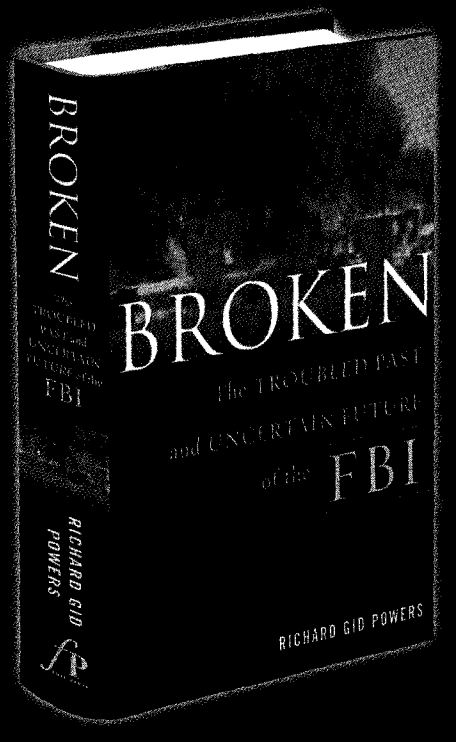
"Of all the agencies involved in intelligence and counterterrorism, the FBI comes out worst in the 9/11 commission's report."
—Richard A. Posner

BROKEN

The TROUBLED PAST and UNCERTAIN FUTURE of the FBI

RICHARD GID POWERS



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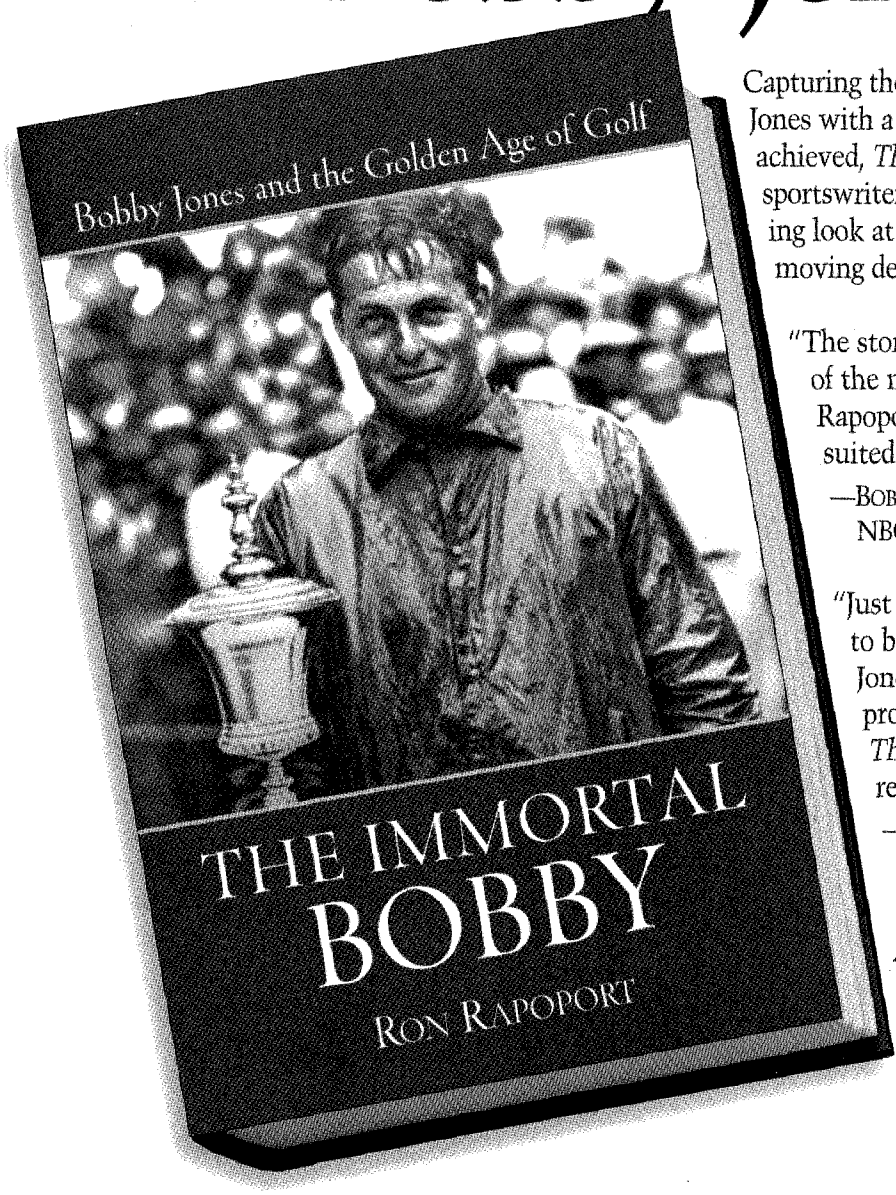
The true story behind the legend of Bobby Jones.



Capturing the story of revered golf giant Bobby Jones with a depth and richness never before achieved, *The Immortal Bobby*, by award-winning sportswriter Ron Rapoport, offers both a penetrating look at the man behind the legend and a moving depiction of a long-gone sporting age.

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—JOHN FEINSTEIN, author of *A Good Walk Spoiled* and *Caddy for Life*

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